

# weekly **worker**



**European Social Forum  
organising meeting in  
Berlin - progress report**

- Slogan wars
- May Days
- STWC bans CPGB
- Hard left guide

No 478

Thursday May 1 2003

Regime change begins at home

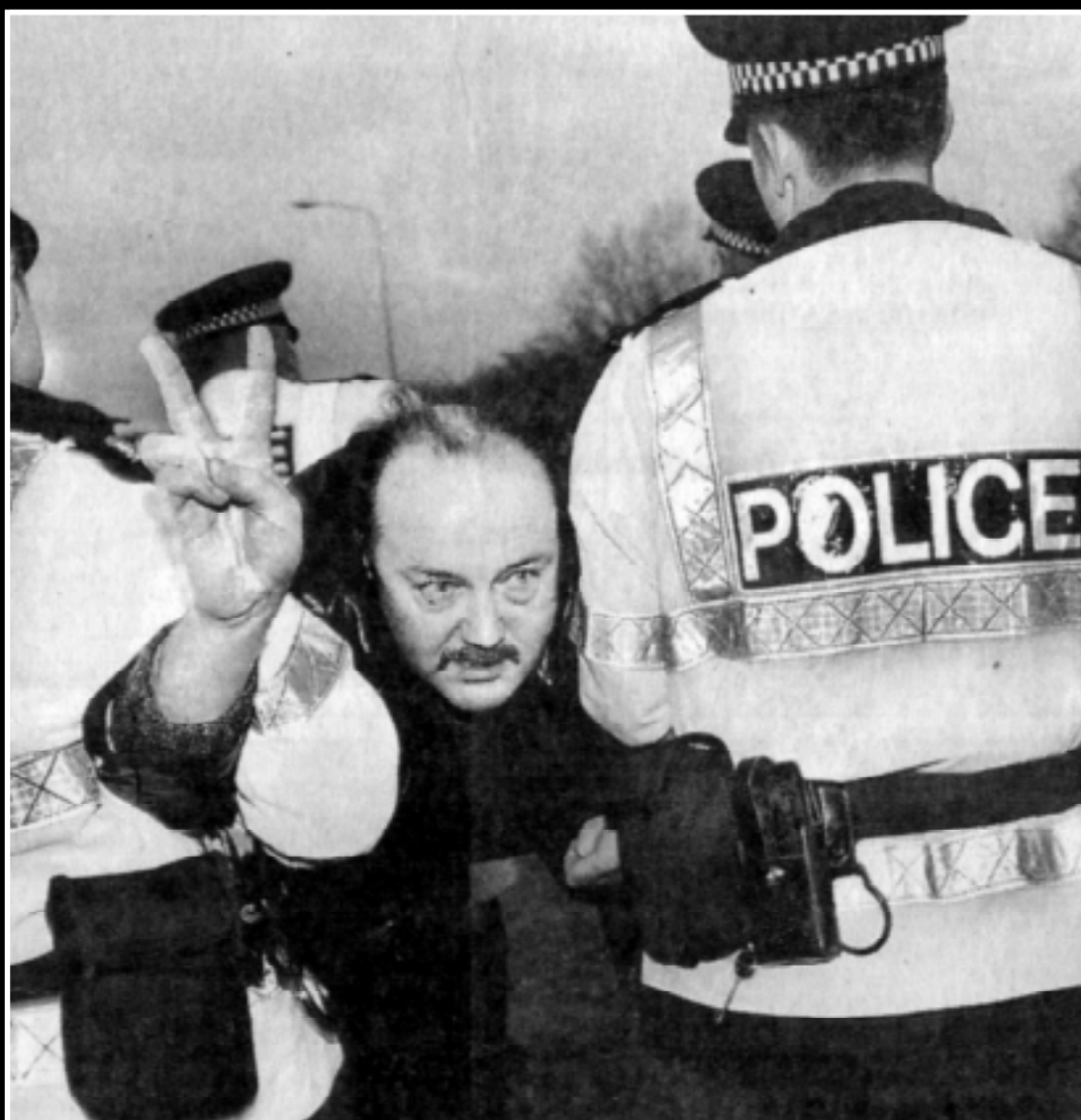
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# Galloway: innocent until proven guilty

## ... but not above criticism

● **Manny Neira slams  
Telegraph witch-hunt of  
anti-war movement - see  
page 12**



## Slogan wars

**W**ar accelerates international developments. September 11 2001 murderously ushered in and excused George Bush's 'war on terrorism'. Now, with Afghanistan and Iraq safely under its belt, United States superimperialism stands militarily gigantic, arrogant, bellicose and ready. Which rogue state will be next ... Syria, Iran, Cuba, North Korea? As for the UN, it is contemptuously ignored. Nato too is treated as another useless appendage inherited from the cold war.

Meanwhile the European Union bifurcates. Britain, Spain, Italy and new Europe bank on Atlanticism and a vain hope of playing Greece to the new Rome. In opposition, the old Europe of France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg are pressing ahead with their own rapid reaction force - overlapping with Nato but free to act without US permission.

War also brings to the fore all that is wanting, equivocal and rotten on the left. What has quietly festered for years under various seemingly innocuous guises suddenly manifests itself - demeaning, debilitating and dangerous. Gulf War II proved to be no exception.

There were the establishment's liberal imperialists and soft leftists. Clare Short, David Aaronovitch and Christopher Hitchens supported the war - on balance. Robin Cook, the *Daily Mirror* and Charles Kennedy crept into the patriotic - pro-war - camp once the fighting started on March 20. Michael Hardt and Naomi Klein - professional anti-establishment figures both - deviously suggested that mobilising against the war acted to divert attention from anti-capitalism. With friends like these ...

What of the solid anti-war left? Did it present a viable alternative which could harness, train and when necessary redirect the protesters who angrily took to the streets in their millions? In a word - no. The anti-war left remained hopelessly fragmented. The Socialist Alliance recoiled from the challenge. A dozen rival factions competed - a dire situation which can only be rectified through a centralised and democratic revolutionary party.

At root our debilitating divisions are political. True, what distinguishes the various groups and 'parties' are what might be called differences of shade. Not black and white. To well meaning philistines this might appear to be cause for celebration. After all more or less everyone agreed that the US-UK 'coalition of the willing' conducted a brutal imperialist war and that claims of weapons of mass destruction and links with bin Laden were entirely spurious.

However, there is no room for smug complacency. Within the spectrum of the anti-war left there were all manner of opportunist errors, bureaucratic practices and reactionary pathologies that blunt or endanger our movement. There is nothing disloyal or petty-minded about openly highlighting such pressing problems. Indeed without a rigorous and unrelenting fight for correct politics nothing can be gained that is substantial or enduring.

No surprises came from the Socialist Workers Party, International Socialist Group and Workers Power. Religiously basing themselves on Trotsky's flawed writings in the 1930s, these comrades regard themselves as duty-bound to side with what they

absurdly insisted on describing as a 'semi-colony'. When push comes to shove, that translated into 'Victory for Saddam Hussein'. Workers Power had the virtue of unambiguously saying so. Here though was the true meaning of the SWP's slogan - 'Victory to the resistance'. Our 'Victory for the Iraqi people' slogan had, it should be stressed, a completely different content. Specifically ruled out as unprincipled were any united fronts with Ba'athism.

It is one thing to recognise that imperialism, concretely US imperialism, is the main enemy globally ... and now rules in Iraq. But that did not excuse siding with the reactionary Ba'athist regime or forming what is euphemistically called a 'military bloc'. The same goes for *Socialist Worker's* uncritical tailing of the "resistance" mounted by Shia clerics and their leadership of Friday demonstrations against US-UK occupation forces (April 26). The tragic lessons of Iran were either never learnt or now lie completely forgotten.

Of course, whereas the SWP, ISG, etc were perfectly sincere in their opportunism, there still lingers on a prostituted left. Worthless papers are artificially kept afloat through subsidies garnered from totally compromising sources. Once there was the cornucopia of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Albania ... and Iraq. However, the state elites in Libya, China, Iran, Cuba and North Korea are still willing to purchase docile extensions of their news services.

In that context the *Morning Star* and its Communist Party of Britain cannot but spring to mind. Till the 1989-91 fall this turgid publication received massive annual handouts. Nearly half the sales were accounted for by Moscow, Warsaw, Prague, etc.

'No to the US-UK war' was the main slogan of Robert Griffiths, Andrew Murray, John Haylett and co. Yet, since the CPB is committed body and soul to a utopian programme which envisages a British socialism emerging unarmed out of a peaceful capitalism, this was presented in syrupy social-pacifistic terms. Moreover the CPB was easily swayed by fellow-thinkers in the Iraqi diaspora not to offer the Saddam dictatorship any support.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty came out with a broadly similar position, summed up by two unexceptional slogans: 'No to the war' and 'No to Saddam'. There was though more to the AWL's even-handedness than meets the eye. Faced by our negative but *provocative* and *calculated* slogan - 'Rather defeat for US-UK forces than their victory' - the AWL duly reacted as expected. Instinctively the comrades blurt out what they really believe.

Of course, that is exactly the significance of our formulation - as it was for Lenin's 'revolutionary defeatist' slogans of 1914. They were designed not to capture mass sentiment - the Russian people had no wish for German occupation. But Lenin's slogans served admirably as razor-edged propaganda weapons which educated cadre and checked tendencies to slip and slide.

Clear lines of demarcation are drawn. Centrists who moot rapprochement with social-patriots are polemically lacerated. Traitors are cut away and ostracised.

In 1917 Lenin continued to ruthlessly attack top Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary 'defencists', though he energetically sought to win over those whom he called "honest defencists" amongst the rank and file. Therefore 'Peace, bread and land' and 'All power to the soviets' occupied prime place in the Bolshevik press. Between March and November 1917 these positive slogans helped secure the overwhelming mass of the working class.

The AWL's version of 'revolutionary defeatism' is Lenin turned on his head. Defeat is reserved for a distant 'third world' dictator. Put another way, 'Rather defeat for Saddam Hussein than his victory'. Unfair polemics? Hyperbole? Unfortunately no.

In the AWL's fortnightly paper *Solidarity* one mercifully discovers that the comrades desire the *eventual* defeat of the Project for the New American Century. Yet paradoxically for them it is "clear that defeat for the coalition forces would have made that larger defeat look less likely in the long term - particularly from the standpoint of the working people of Iraq" (April 17). Marxism takes the "standpoint" of the world's working class and humanity as its first principal. The AWL operates according to an inverted lesser evilism.

This brings the AWL to the outskirts of the liberal imperialist camp inhabited by Short, Aaronovitch, Hitchens, etc. Thankfully the AWL has not yet summoned up the courage to follow through the disastrous internal logic of its method. It has though already half-fallen for US lies that its invasion was directed at overthrowing tyranny and had the benign intention of introducing some paradigmatic version of western democracy for the downtrodden Iraqi masses.

Mass demonstrations, the freedom to speak out against the occupation, the re-establishment of leftwing political parties - to all intents and purposes such examples of basic democracy are ominously credited to the US-UK coalition and general Jay Garner. Not critically assessed as the *unintended* by-product of the chaotic removal of the Saddam Hussein dictatorship which should be exploited and extended from below. The US wants a democratic facade - corrupt, manipulable and safely pliant. Behind the scenes, though, an American sponsored oilocracy will control.

The 'third campist' AWL is following in the footsteps of Max Shachtman - posthumously elevated to the status of intellectual progenitor. Criminally in April 1961 Shachtman backed the US-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion in the name of bringing democracy to the Cuban people. While the SWP, ISG, etc toy with the reactionary anti-imperialist second camp, for the AWL it is the first camp which beckons. Turn back comrades, while you still can ●

**Jack Conrad**

**... that did not excuse siding with the reactionary Ba'athist regime or forming what is euphemistically called a 'military bloc'**

## LETTERS



Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed

### Dead end

Although highlighting some obvious things about the British National Party and its activities, Jeremy Butler seems to have missed the point ('Lesser evilism and beating the BNP' *Weekly Worker* April 24).

The Socialist Alliance has already been mothballed by the Socialist Workers Party, so this may well be its last outing as an 'electoral front' anyway - and after the appalling results it will receive, the SWP will gradually further disengage and blame the SA's failure on the more radical pro-partyist elements as being 'liquidationists'.

Please open your eyes and see the SWP executive for what they are, and prepare for Blair's demise by joining others who have long recognised that we need to be fighting from within the labour movement, not from without.

The mass party will only emerge with the participation of the new wave of union militants, the growing band of Labour rebels and the bands of radical youth being drawn into various protests - though we must recognise that thousands of them will not find bureaucratic centralist or communist sects attractive.

New Labour *will* lose its grip on the domestic front - maybe not this year or next, but it is inevitable. The failures and troubles of Railtrack and British Telecom; the recent report that a Glasgow hospital built under PFI is already making drastic cuts in staff and care because its repayments to the private sector are much more than anticipated, and so forth: these are all birds coming home to roost. On top of this, no matter what the treasury predicts, mass lay-offs are becoming the order of the day; tax receipts will be down and Brown will not borrow, so things will get much tougher for the masses. We as always will bear the brunt.

New Labour has not lost support on the international front, as the SWP predicted. Now, ill-advised by your blinkered executive, Jeremy and his fellow local candidates are standing on an anti-war platform that most local tenants will be turned off by - not because many agree with war, but because things have moved on already, and they will be more interested in *local* issues and their own prospects. This is life, 'charity begins at home', 'family comes first'.

The BNP has realised that to participate on the playing field of liberal democracy it has to hide its bovine boys and clean up its act. Instead of intimidating the electorate, it has given itself a makeover and is listening to grievances over cracks in the pavement and bad lighting, and consequently it plays on the prejudices and worries of the bigoted and ill-educated, among whom it is successfully sinking roots.

As socialists, revolutionary or reformist, we are all convinced about what needs to be done; we are all convinced by most if not all of our main arguments. However, we have not realised how to package our message and how to present ourselves. Perhaps, when it comes to playing the election stakes, Griffin could teach you more than Rees?

So what are the SA armed with? Usually they are equipped with the latest dictat of opportunism sent from the head office - a portfolio of 'old Labour' policies and SWP slogans - pathetic. Consequently, Jeremy and his fellow SA comrades are simply the Neanderthals of socialist development in the UK - another evolutionary dead-end.

**Marilyn Flanders**  
email

### Welcome?

I read the articles 'Lesser evilism and beating the BNP' and 'Racism, Nazism

and fighting fascism' with great interest.

I have a relation who is a shop steward and a member of his works council. At the same time he is completely racist and preoccupied with asylum-seekers. The British working class has two strands - one revolutionary, the other reactionary. It seems that this dual personality can coexist in individuals as well. If a shop steward from a socialist family can have illusions in the BNP, how much wider must support be amongst readers of *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail*?

My relation says that Hitler was right when he murdered the Jews. He also professes support for the BNP, which he says is the only party that will do something about asylum-seekers. I have yet to point out to him that people with a disability, which also includes me, would end up in a concentration camp or worse, if the BNP ever came to power.

What should I say to persuade him that the ideas of Hitler and the BNP are wrong? Just saying, 'Asylum-seekers are welcome here', as the SWP do, will get me absolutely nowhere. Can readers of the *Weekly Worker* advise me?

**John Smith**  
East Anglia

### Credit SWP

Comrade Sarah Glynn argued in her letter that it was "Bush and Blair" who have built the anti-war movement (*Weekly Worker* April 24). This seems an odd logic to apply. I suppose it was Franco who built the mass movement against fascism in Spain; the tsar that organised the Russian Revolution; and why not credit the Ku Klux Klan as building the civil rights movement in the United States of America?

Ms Glynn cannot bring herself to give hundreds of thousands of anti-war activists the credit for mobilising millions against this imperialist slaughter. This, however, is no surprise coming from the CPGB, as it appears that its old habit of seeing the SWP as the main enemy has re-emerged.

Comrade Glynn appears to find it annoying that a coalition to stop the war has been built in Cambridge. This is a sad indictment of a narrow sectarian attitude where the success of a movement is gauged by how many weird sects can sit in a room together and row about who will be a steward and who will be publicity officer, etc.

I appreciate you do not agree with the SWP on many matters. For example, you do not mind the nazi British National Party spreading its filth, as you feel a good old-fashioned argument can undermine them. That did not quite work in Germany.

It would do comrade Glynn some good if she was to vent her venom against Bush and Blair, not against the SWP. I do not claim that it was just the SWP who built the coalition, but that the movement is the property of thousands of people from all sorts of backgrounds. I do believe, however, that the SWP has been serious in being part of this wave of anti-imperialism and encouraged people to get involved, regardless of whether they are going to join the SWP or not.

**Bobby Blazer**  
email

### Asylum for Aziz

Your article, 'Public relations campaign stumbles', was a load of crap (*Weekly Worker* April 3).

The war is over. The coalition has won. The Iraqi people are liberated. Tariq Aziz has surrendered and sought asylum in the UK. Did you hear that? The UK! This piece of shit wants asylum in a country that his nation has just lost a war to. Kind of says a lot about his thoughts about freedom in the UK and its respect for human rights, doesn't it?

**James Brubaker**  
email

## Self-indulgence

Re: your article ‘Balance sheet’ (*Weekly Worker* April 17). To reduce the legacy of the anti-war movement to increased sales for the *Weekly Worker*, however worthy a publication it might be, is indeed the height of self-indulgence and deluded self-importance!

**David Morgan**  
email

## Rail tactics

I agree with much of what Greg Tucker says in his interview (‘On the tracks’, April 23). It is more what is not said that is the problem.

If the train operating companies are being underwritten financially by the government, then it is more important than ever that there is a serious escalation of the RMT guards strike. Only transport chaos and management’s inability to run an adequate service will force their hand.

It was the threat of a five-day strike on Scotrail in 1997 that grabbed media attention and focused all sorts of minds. Aslef trainmen and drivers had worked through the one-day strikes but were prepared to go off sick if the RMT went ahead with their strike.

Unfortunately, Knapp called this off, using scabbing at some depots as an excuse. There is presently no scabbing on Scotrail, but it is doubtful whether two 48-hour strikes will succeed in either dragging Aslef into the dispute, showing the practical solidarity needed to win quickly, or get management to back down as a result of the slightly increased escalation. There is little wisdom in the long-drawn-out war of attrition approach. What group of workers has it actually worked for? Look at the firefighters.

There is also something very wrong with the RMT and Aslef backing each other’s motions at STUC conference over the strike issue and the repeal of all anti-union legislation when they are not even prepared to lift a phone and organise legal solidarity at a general secretary level.

Aslef has its own serious issues, particularly over pensions. Why, if Mickey Rix is so opposed to anti-union laws, could ballots not have been arranged simultaneously and the same strike days named to ensure a quick victory for both drivers and guards over their respective issues? Having one group of workers out on the streets fighting for their jobs and another group driving trains as if the issues do not affect them is sheer madness.

At the hazards conference last year, one female train driver stated at a workshop that every driver in her depot had neck problems. Why? Because there were no guards on the trains and the mirrors on the station platforms were habitually vandalised, meaning train drivers had to physically check back to see if station platforms were clear, perhaps hundreds of times each shift. And yet Aslef drivers work trains on strike days alongside scab managers as if there will be no adverse consequences for them if guards become ticket collectors.

The relationship between Arkright Road and its membership continues to be something akin to the blind leading the blind. How can it be right for Aslef to instruct members to work as normal when the consequence of this will see train drivers working 11-hour shifts on driver-only trains, having sole responsibility for the safety of the passengers.

Workers’ unity and solidarity have to be much more than empty rhetoric at the annual round of union conferences.

**Peter Burton**  
email

## Workers’ votes

Workers should have the same right to vote on their bosses’ pay as shareholders.

In a week of high-profile company AGMs, including Corus and BAe Systems, and with the HSBC AGM imminent, it is wrong for workers to be locked

outside, whilst shareholders alone have a say. Bad bosses must be held to account. No good boss should fear the verdict of their employees.

Shareholders invest their money. Our members invest their lives.

**Jack Dromey**  
General secretary candidate, TGWU

## Loony SLP

Goodness, maybe there was something to the ‘loony lefties’ tag after all (‘Scargill moves against Brar’ *Weekly Worker* March 6).

“Good relations” with the Workers Party of North Korea? It would almost be funny if North Korea were not a regime oppressing workers (and peasants, but they do not count, obviously) more than any other. I assumed Scargill was trying to offer a realistic alternative to the centre-right vacuousness of New Labour - instead he has created a Stalinist monster of a party not worthy of the description ‘socialist’.

**Leo Whitham**  
Warwick

## CPGB-AWL

Just a quibble with the ‘Unwarranted’ letter (*Weekly Worker* April 17). If the CPGB had considered that the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty held racist views towards Arabs, or anyone else for that matter, it would have been very difficult for us to pursue a policy of rapprochement towards them. But in leaning over backwards to avoid anti-semitism they have developed a blind spot towards the national rights of the Palestinians. We have tried to address this issue in our debates with them.

A problem remains that some AWL members - Mark Osborn, for example - do believe that left groups which support victory to the Palestinians are subjectively anti-semitic. Which to my mind is an accusation of racism. It is one thing to say that the necessary consequence of victory to a single Palestinian state would be ethnic cleansing, and therefore calling for it means supporting anti-semitic action in practice. This is neither the subjective intent nor subjective desire of those supporting a single-state solution.

Perhaps, in the interest of left unity, the writers of the letter should be calling on the AWL to moderate their language as well.

**Phil Kent**  
Hackney

## Aaronovitch

A lifetime of studying the left has driven David Aaronovitch into the hands of the bourgeoisie. In no way can his apostasy be blamed on the *Weekly Worker*, as Eddie Holland claims (Letters, April 17). Probably the present marginalisation of the left project does not fit in with his personal ambition.

A more credible reason for his abandonment of socialism is the ingrained sectarianism which affects so much of the lefts’ propaganda. The *Weekly Worker* is an exception to this tendency. A critical analytical light shining through the fog of opportunism.

Eddie Holland seems to think that the *Weekly Worker* project is to provide the bourgeoisie with anti-socialist propaganda. This is not the case. The point is to develop the best and most consistent defence of communism, which cannot be done without rigorous self-criticism.

**Arthur Lawrence**  
email

## Left bashing

I have been reading the *Weekly Worker* on line for about six months and for the first time feel the need to write to you.

Whilst I agree with much of what is written in your paper and enjoy those contents which I do not, there are some things which I strongly disagree with. In Jack Conrad’s article he attacks the Stop

the War Coalition and states that they play a numbers game. As someone who was on all the marches, I cannot see any rhyme or reason for this stupid attack. To get two million people on the streets of London was a fantastic achievement.

I live in the Manchester area and the coalition have been fantastic in having the guts to stand up against this imperialist war. The CPGB does not seem to have been keen to get stuck into the movement in this major city in the UK, so how do you have the nerve to then attack the SWP and others for doing so? I have my disagreements with the SWP but feel they have done a very creditable service to the movement by being fully committed to the cause.

Lastly you attack the rest of the left and state that these other organisations have leaderships who pretend to know all. But every week we have Mr Jack Conrad writing the key article and I have seen in your archive section how he responds when he is challenged. He appears to see himself as the font of all knowledge. Is it not time the CPGB practised what it preaches? Stop bashing the left, when you do exactly the same as them, and try and build the anti-war movement and perhaps more people would join your organisation.

**Jim Boogles**  
email

## Stop the tour

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has accepted the right of the Zimbabwe Cricket Union (ZCU) to politically vet its players and has previously defended its decision to invite the Zimbabwean team, which arrives in Britain this week, claiming that sport should be kept separate from politics.

But the ZCU is not an independent sporting body. It is an arm of the Mugabe regime. Most officials are supporters of the ruling party, Zanu-PF. Those who have shown insufficient loyalty have been purged. President Mugabe is patron. The ZCU’s official letterhead bears the words, “Patron: his excellency the president of the republic of Zimbabwe, Cd RG Mugabe”. ‘Cd’ stands for ‘comrade’. The use of this Zanu-PF party-speak is evidence the ZCU has a very close and deferential association with the Mugabe regime and is obviously proud to be associated with the president comrade. His authority was required before the tour could go ahead.

All Zimbabwe’s players are politically approved. Only those uncritical of Mugabe were eligible for selection. After Henry Olonga and Andy Flower wore black armbands during February’s World Cup to mourn the death of democracy, they were forced out of the Zimbabwe team. Olonga was terrorised with death threats and fled to South Africa in fear of his life. Flower was told his cricket career was finished and has been forced to seek exile in the UK.

Zimbabwe’s cricketers are sporting ambassadors for the Mugabe regime. Mugabe wants this tour to go ahead. It is part of his strategy to normalise relations with the rest of the world. There can be no normal sporting relations with an abnormal regime that uses torture, rape and murder as weapons of repression. It is wrong for England to play cricket with a team that flouts the sporting principles of open selection and fair play by requiring its players to pass a political loyalty test.

**Peter Tatchell**  
Stop the Tour campaign

## Correction

In ‘Aussie six’ (April 23) you mention that opposition to the Socialist Alliance in Australia comes from the International Socialist Group. That is not right. The opposition comes from the International Socialist *Organisation*, a loyal follower of the Socialist Workers Party in the United Kingdom.

**David Silcock**  
Australia

# ACTION

### London Communist forum

Sunday May 4, 5pm - ‘The democratic urge’, using August Nimtz’s *Marx and Engels: their contribution to the democratic breakthrough* as a study guide. Phone 07950 416 922 for details.

### Southeast London Communist forum

‘The new American century and how to fight it’ - Tuesday May 13, 7pm, Greenwich West Community and Arts Centre, 141 Greenwich High Road, London SE10 (Greenwich BR and DLR). All welcome. 07958 574305.

### May Day actions

**London** Thursday May 1: Demonstration, supported by TUC and Stop the War Coalition. Assemble 12noon at Clerkenwell Green; march to Trafalgar Square.

‘Weapons of mass construction’: Assemble 2pm onwards, Lockheed Martin, corner High Holborn and Endell St, WC1.

Critical Mass bike ride. Assemble home office, Birdcage Walk. Converge at Shell UK, Strand, WC2. See <http://cmlondon.enrager.net> for more details.

**Birmingham** Saturday May 3: Assemble 12.30pm, Chamberlain Square, march through city centre for rally.

**Edinburgh** Saturday May 3: Assemble 11.30am, East Market Street. Rally 1pm, Festival Square (off Lothian Road).

**Irvine and North Ayrshire** Saturday May 3: Assemble 10.30am, Redburn Centre, Irvine. March to rally at 12 noon, Castlepark Community Centre.

**Glasgow** Sunday May 4: Assemble 11am, George Square. March 11.30am to rally at Glasgow Green.

### Dropping songs

Anti-war entertainment: Saturday May 3, 7.30pm, Studio Theatre, Compton Terrace, London N1. Featuring Indie, Ska; south Asian music from Sandrats, Strings, Monkey Nuts, Durdana Ansari and Moushumi Bhowmik; poetry by William Alderson. Special guest speaker: Jeremy Corbyn MP. Organised by Media Workers Against the War.

### For a workers’ party

The Socialist Alliance and the way forward - discussion, Saturday May 3, 1pm to 4pm, Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont Road, London WC1 (nearest tube: Russell Square).

Proposals for SA conference and Campaign for a Workers Party platform.

### Socialist Alliance annual conference

Saturday May 10, 10am to 5pm, Islington Green School, London. 020 7791 3138; [www.socialistalliance.net](http://www.socialistalliance.net)

### Free Palestine

National rally, Saturday May 17, 1.30pm, Trafalgar Square, London. Called by Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

### Artists Against the War

‘Shock and awe’ cabaret at The Cockpit Theatre, Blackfriars, London - May 8, 12 and 26. [www.shockandawe.org.uk](http://www.shockandawe.org.uk)

### NCADC AGM

National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns annual general meeting, Saturday June 21, 12 noon to 5pm, Carrs Lane Church, Carrs Lane, Birmingham. Open to all anti-deportation campaigns (reasonable travel expenses paid) and their supporters. Crèche and lunch provided.

Confirm attendance to nearest NCADC coordinator:

London and South East England - Allison Bennett, [ncadc-london@ncadc.org.uk](mailto:ncadc-london@ncadc.org.uk)

North East England and Scotland - Kath Sainsbury, [ncadc-ne@ncadc.org.uk](mailto:ncadc-ne@ncadc.org.uk)

North West England and Greater Manchester - Tony Openshaw, [ncadc-nw@ncadc.org.uk](mailto:ncadc-nw@ncadc.org.uk)

NCADC, 110 Hamstead Road, Birmingham B20 2QS, 0121-554 6947; [ncadc@ncadc.org.uk](mailto:ncadc@ncadc.org.uk); <http://www.ncadc.org.uk>

### Party wills

The CPGB has forms available for you to include the Party and the struggle for communism in your will. Write for details.

### RDG

To contact the Revolutionary Democratic Group, email [rdgroup@yahoo.com](mailto:rdgroup@yahoo.com).

[www.cpgb.org.uk/action](http://www.cpgb.org.uk/action)

# Communist University

**This annual school for the thinking left will be debating a whole range of issues to do with the Iraq war including:**

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- rogue states and why they were invented
- fighting for defeat: Leninism and war
- Socialist Alliance and Iraq: did it meet the test?

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## THE LEFT

Searchlight -  
www.searchlightmagazine.com

# Respectable twin of ANL

**T**he liberal anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* has come to be regarded as a resource for intelligence on far-right activities across Britain and Europe. Quite understandably there is a degree of overlap between it and the Anti-Nazi League (see *Weekly Worker* April 24), advocating the same kind of cross-class mobilisations against the fascists.

The *Searchlight* home page is pretty minimalist, managing to carry a fair amount of material without looking cluttered, achieved by interspersing the links with graphics. The navigation box in the top left corner is the best way around the site.

For comrades unfamiliar with the magazine, the 'What is *Searchlight*?' link should be the first port of call. Here we are treated to a short potted account of its 41-year history, and a description of its areas of work - all of which are consistent with its aim of "achieving the broadest possible unity in the fight against racism, neo-nazism, fascism, and prejudice". These activities include publications, research, campaigning, advice and attempts to influence government policy (citing specific instances when it has done so).

Next in the navigation box is an archive of selected material from *Searchlight*, running back to September 1981. Generally this material is both more readable and useful than the ANL's (mis)education pack. For example, a number of articles are quick to point out the role anti-asylum-seeker hysteria has played in creating favourable conditions for fascists to operate, whereas the ANL prefers to pretend that the British National Party is almost solely responsible. The page also has a bar reserved for special features, organising certain articles under specific themes. These provide analyses of contemporary far-right movements, political and cultural histories, women and fascism, and a number of others. All are well written and avoid the ANL's usual patronising tone.

The following feature in the box is 'Publications', which I guess is the nearest *Searchlight* gets to branded merchandise. The left of the screen is given over to a number of books and pamphlets dealing with subjects as diverse as the fascist music scene, fascism and the labour movement, and the US militia movement. *Searchlight* postcards are advertised too, picturing the BNP's fuhrer, Nick Griffin, amongst others. A number of *Searchlight*-sponsored tabloids and leaflets from the 2002 local

elections can be downloaded in pdf. Text versions and newer editions from this year's campaign are yet to be uploaded.

The 'trade union' link takes us to the *Trade union friends of Searchlight* newsletter, which serves TU branches affiliated to the magazine. This page appeals for volunteers for an advisory group and asks activists to write for the bulletin and get anti-fascist motions through union branches. Only seven issues have been published so far (the newsletter appears to come out annually) and of these the last four can be viewed in text. Finally 'USA' links to themed articles on the murky world of the American far right.

The next prominent item is a graphic of Nick Griffin from his 2001 election night performance. This leads to stopthebnp.com, a pretty sparse site with little information that is not already carried on the *Searchlight* site proper. This is certainly in need of a good deal of work if it is going to be an effective anti-fascist resource.

The current issue is prominently displayed, but unfortunately only four selected portions of it are online. What is available seems to be entirely random; it would at least be reasonable to expect the cover story to be among those ready to read.

The bottom of the page is given over to four links - to features that can be accessed via the archives, and to *Searchlight*'s educational trust and information services. Unfortunately the former is undergoing a complete reconstruction, but the latter is an interesting resource on fascism generally and the BNP in particular (only an article in its own right would do it any justice).

Generally there is little to quibble about the website in and of itself. It is both compact and comprehensive, and let down only by stopthebnp.com. However, like the ANL it is the politics of *Searchlight* that must be challenged. For example, all the domestic links to other organisations refer to 'respectable' liberal bodies such as the Commission for Racial Equality and the Runnymede Trust. Even worse is a prominently featured article that approvingly looks at the Council of Europe's move to criminalise online "hatespeech". With the emphasis on enlisting the state in the fight against fascism, anti-fascists should look at the *Searchlight* website with an extremely critical eye ●

Phil Hamilton

# Australian echoes

As in Britain, the Australian Socialist Alliance has been paralysed by the stubborn determination of one group in particular to prevent the alliance becoming a party. **Dave Riley**, a member of the Australian SA Non-Aligned Caucus, gives his view on the type of party it should become

**T**he Socialist Alliance in Australia was launched in February 2001 by the Democratic Socialist Party and the International Socialist Organisation (sister party of the British Socialist Workers Party), and formed by eight left groups and parties soon afterwards. While primarily chartered as an electoral bloc, in the subsequent two years the nature of the alliance has qualitatively changed.

Other campaigns besides elections were pursued as it became increasingly obvious that the package was more successful than at first thought. Now, as the alliance approaches its second conference in May, the core debate centres on what to do next.

The first group to note these dynamic changes and respond to them was the DSP, which proposed in November 2002 that it cease to function as an independent entity and integrate itself into the alliance - thereby making its resources available to the project. The ISO, which advocates that the alliance should remain primarily an electoral united front - albeit "of a special kind" - vigorously opposed the regroupment moves implicit in the DSP's offer. The ISO insisted that this would lead to a DSP takeover of the SA and, thus rebadged, would scare away all the independents.

So adamant was the ISO that this should not happen that it threatened to leave the project if the DSP moved to liquidate itself. The DSP withdrew its schedule of reforming as a tendency in the alliance but remains committed to integration at some stage in the future.

Since this toe to toe exchange, none of the affiliates have been willing to interpret the SA project the way the DSP has done. In the main, they remain committed to their own party-building projects separate from that of the alliance. Indeed, despite all the rhetoric about unity, none will unconditionally commit to a regroupment process under the umbrella of Socialist Alliance. Basically, most of them want to maintain the political status quo.

Aside from each outfit's narrow schemas which hamper their thinking and flexibility, the DSP is itself handicapped because it is two to three times bigger than any of its affiliate partners. However, what was not taken into account was the large number of non-affiliates who are SA members. At the present time this is more than half the membership.

When the dispute settled in between the affiliates about what the SA was or could become, the non-aligned independents basically sat on their hands. Some even left and joined the Greens, while others became inactive. As the arguments ran their course, a thick paralysis hung over the project.

But in March there was a breakthrough - the non-aligned began to independently organise. This significant initiative has changed the whole nature of the debate and altered the SA's immediate prospects. Instead of a circuitous theoretical debate between competing affiliates about political differences, the discussion has once again returned to the question of formally regrouping the socialist left inside the alliance.

In March an open statement was circulated nationally seeking endorsees. This stated: "Non-aligned members are not persuaded by affiliate concerns of the alliance being dominated by any one

particular tendency. For affiliates to abandon the terrain of debate for socialist regroupment on the basis of caution or, worse, on the basis of historical circumstances long past, will be to realise precisely a *de facto* single-tendency domination. As long as the alliance retains its current character as a democratic organisation, where a consensus-building, activist culture and the force of the better argument prevails, the case for retaining separate party organisational structures by affiliates rings hollow ..."

Contrary to the views advocated by most of the founding groups and parties, the non-aligned statement aggressively called for affiliates to present their case to the coming conference and negotiate their terms for retaining the organisational and programmatic integrity of their tendency as part of the socialist party the alliance would become.

This changed the debate absolutely. As the statement was circulated, the momentum picked up, so that now in the space of less than a month more than 100 non-aligned members have signed the call for a multi-tendency socialist party. Endorsees include key trade union activists such as Chris Cain and Craig Johnston, indigenous community leaders like Sam Watson, and renowned Marxist academic Humphrey McQueen. All around the country, non-aligned members are enthusiastically responding to the prospect of creating a party that regroups the socialist left - aligned and non aligned - and does much more than run in elections and occasional other odd jobs.

In a country the size of Australia and within the confines of a still organisationally weak branch structure, this resonance is extraordinary. The non-aligned members have established a caucus around a seven-point resolution, which will be put to the May conference. This states:

- We want the alliance to become a single, multi-tendency socialist party.
- We want to progress this move right now, starting with this conference.
- A commitment from affiliates to building the Socialist Alliance through integration needs to be demonstrated, in word and in deed.
- Our multi-tendency socialist party should be as broad as possible.
- We accept and welcome a strong revolutionary socialist stream as an integral part of our vision of a broad socialist party.
- We need strong democratic structures to accommodate diversity.
- We need a common socialist voice: in our platform, in a national paper, and in our campaigns.

As an adjunct to these seven points, the caucus has won support for an enlarged national leadership body formally comprising 50% of non-aligned members rather than persevere with a default situation where affiliates dominated the national executive.

In the meantime, the ISO has not changed its original position. Still committed to an electoral coalition with variations, at its recent national committee meeting - and to the surprise of many - it decided to stay in and fight for its particular view of the alliance. This decision has been viewed by the Non-Aligned Caucus as a major victory, given the ISO's unwillingness to budge from its original scheme for what the SA should be and its registered hostility to any group integrating itself into the alliance.

So on the weekend of May 9-11 the socialist movement here will be presented with a unique opportunity to remake itself and enter a qualitatively new stage. There will be a lot riding on our deliberations. Keep watching down under ●

● Dave Riley can be contacted on [dhell@optsunet.com.au](mailto:dhell@optsunet.com.au)

## Fighting fund

# No compromise

*The Daily Telegraph* alleges that George Galloway has pocketed large sums of money courtesy of the Iraqi regime. While this has all the hallmarks of a stitch-up, aimed at discrediting the anti-war movement, the fact that some on the left have been prepared to accept funding from dubious sources gives the story credence.

Such sponsorship always comes with a price tag - usually in the form of parroting the paymaster's political line. Which is why the *Weekly Worker* relies entirely upon the generosity of our readers and supporters to boost our income over and above what we get from sales and subscriptions. Our commitment to telling the truth will never be compromised.

And that, in turn, is why week after week our paper carries my appeal. As a result, we are often very pleasantly surprised. No more so than this week, when my mailbox contained a remarkably generous cheque for £200 from KG.

Thank you, comrade. You have helped us smash through our monthly target of £500. Together with contributions from JF (£20), DS (£15), HC and SY (£10 each), and AS (£5), you ensured we ended April more than £100 to the good - out total for the month is a magnificent £608.

We expect to sell several hundred extra copies of our paper at the various May Day events up and down the country this weekend. In addition, of course, there will be the thousands who read us worldwide on the web - last week 7,722 checked us out on [www.cpgb.org.uk](http://www.cpgb.org.uk).

As always, I appeal to our internet readers, as well as those who take the print issue, to make up for what we lack in subsidies from Iraq, Libya, China, North Korea ... Over to you, comrades ●

Robbie Rix

Ask for a bankers order form, or send cheques, payable to Weekly Worker

around  
**THEWEB**

# STOP THE WAR COALITION

## Ban on CPGB Movement needs openness

Andrew Murray and Lindsay German, who effectively form the leadership of the Stop the War Coalition, put the movement in a bad political light this week when they acted as dyed-in-the-wool bureaucrats determined to stifle openness, accountability and democracy.

The CPGB, as one of the affiliated organisations of the coalition, had been informed that we could attend as observers at the April 28 steering committee meeting. We had been told this at the conference in January and had double-checked with the office organiser, Gargy, last week, who gave us the details. I therefore went along as our representative.

I arrived just as the meeting of about 60 was beginning. There was a debate around slogans taking place. I could not help but notice how STWC chair Andrew Murray (a member of the *Morning Star*'s Communist Party of Britain) and national convenor Lindsay German (Socialist Workers Party) stared in my direction from the top table and whispered furtively.

Then Jane Challice, treasurer, was beckoned over by Lindsay German. She in her turn came to where I was sitting at the back of the room. She demand to know who I was and what I was doing there. I calmly explained. She left, not looking too happy, and went back to speak to comrades German and Murray. She then returned to tell me that they did not allow observers and I must leave immediately. I refused and said my presence was entirely legitimate and that it should be put to the meeting.

Jane Challice then proceeded to announce that "there is somebody in the

meeting who should not be here and she says she is entitled to be here as an observer but we do not allow observers". People appeared a bit flabbergasted and turned to look at me, expecting perhaps to see an M15 spy or a member of the BNP in their midst. The man beside me complained that meetings should not be held in secret.

Gargy then spoke and said she had told us we could attend and that there were several other observers present whom she had invited. It was clear from her response that there had never been any such attempt at an exclusion before. Even though she held a position of responsibility within the STWC, it seems she was unaware of any ban. Two other comrades identified themselves as observers, shocked to find themselves suddenly in the firing line of a witch-hunt.

Andrew Murray then spoke and said that it was not and never had been the practice to have observers. He then muttered something about it being particularly important, given there were "sensitive issues" to be discussed.

I asked to have the decision put to the meeting. I urged the STWC not to set a harmful and undemocratic precedent. I argued that the coalition needed to be open and these meetings should not be held behind the back of the movement. I also defended the presence of the CPGB as an affiliated organisation that had worked hard to build the demonstrations. Moreover we had been informed we could attend. I believe that I had the sympathy of much of the meeting.

Comrade Murray said that he had

made a ruling as chair but would put it to a vote anyway. It seemed he was trying to make it appear that a vote against his ruling would be a direct challenge to the chair. As an adept bureaucrat he was clearly trying to undermine any support for me.

The vote was approximately 15 for the exclusion of observers, with five or six against. Murray announced that the vote had been carried with "a few abstentions". But he had not asked for an indication of abstentions and shamefully at least half the meeting had not taken part in the vote. He then demanded that we leave. There were a number who looked very hurt. This was a clear attack on the CPGB which had hit others too. It certainly showed the logic of witch-hunts. Unless stopped everyone suffers.

Nevertheless Murray, German and Challice got what they wanted. Due to their narrow and self-serving sectarianism the movement will be denied a report in the *Weekly Worker* of how the STWC is thinking.

That is a real loss. Our paper has after all won a deserved reputation for unequalled reporting and analysis of the politics of the left in Britain. This is particularly vital as the present time. Iraq is under occupation and the US is making threatening noises towards Syria and North Korea. There is also the whole issue of George Galloway. Should we defend him against the Blairite purge? (I think we should.) Should we allow *The Daily Telegraph* to smear the whole anti-war movement by standing up for Galloway uncritically? (I think we should not.) Instead of the *Weekly Worker* the move-

ment will have to rely on the usual anodyne STWC press releases and clipped pronouncements made by Andrew Murray and Lindsay German. Naturally in the inner sanctums - certainly on the CPB's executive and the SWP's political committee - something approaching the truth will be told. But that is considered too dangerous, too intoxicating for mere rank and file activists and those outside the charmed circle.

Should we expect anything else from comrade Murray? Not when we consider his origins and political CV. Before the ultra-right *Marxism Today* faction dissolved the 'official' CPGB in 1991, Murray was a loyal lieutenant of Fergus Nicholson - the *éminence grise* of the 'broad left' monthly *Straight Left* and leader of his own carefully CPGB managed opposition faction. To get a flavour of how Nicholson imagined himself in his inner thought-world all one need know is his *nom de plume* - Harry Steel. Harry comes from the first name of Harry Pollitt, CPGB general secretary from the late 1920s to 1956, when he became chair. Steel is taken from Stalin - the 'man of steel'.

Murray broke with Nicholson in the 1990s, organisationally but not politically. And after being one of the main movers behind the short lived publication *Communist Liaison*, he and his micro-faction threw in their lot with the Rob Griffiths-John Haylett wing of the CPB. He once wrote regularly in the *Morning Star* taking particular delight in attacking the "Trotskyites of the Socialist Alliance". Now he works full-time for the traindrivers union Aslef. To sum up,

Murray is an unreconstituted Stalinite.

All we need say about comrade German is that, though she and her organisation are retrospectively anti-Stalin and for democracy in the Soviet Union, when it comes to present-day Britain she and Murray make a perfect couple. Different backgrounds, yes, but common bureaucratic methods and instincts.

Clearly we must fight to overcome the closed culture being imposed upon the STWC. There is nothing natural about it. After all in the Socialist Alliance any member may attend the national council and even the executive finds the presence of observers and substitutes unproblematic.

Sadly comrade Murray shows disdain not for his *bête noire*, the *Weekly Worker*, but for everyone in the STWC he professes to represent. He and comrade German rightly criticised the Westminster parliament for being undemocratic before the Iraq war. Now they behave in a manner akin to those 19th century Tories who refused to allow the press to report the proceedings of parliament. That leading socialists behave in this way in the 21st century brings shame upon our entire movement.

It is not the British state they are afraid of, but honest criticism. Talk of "sensitive issues" is just a foil - one thing you can guarantee is that M15 will have their plants at the very top of the STWC. The exclusion of affiliates should be roundly condemned by all democrats.

This is not about my rights or the rights of the CPGB. This is about the rights of the anti-movement to hear the truth ●

Anne Mc Shane

# London's unlikely champion of dissent

A successful and positive launch of the Greenwich Stop the War Coalition put paid to those pundits who say the anti-war movement has evaporated with the conquest of Iraq.

More than 200 people packed into the Greenwich Forum to hear Tony Benn, Dr Ghayasuddin Siddiqui (Muslim Parliament), Kate Hudson (CND vice-chair) and Lindsay German (Socialist Workers Party and STWC national convenor) argue the case for continuing with the anti-war movement. A steering committee will be established. The mood was that now more than ever deepening our organisational abilities was the order of the day - this would allow us to fight the battles ahead.

As comrades gathered for the meeting, I enquired of Lindsay German if I too would be barred from attending, as Anne Mc Shane had been removed from the STWC steering committee as an observer. I was greeted by an uncomfortable, stony-faced silence. Lindsay is normally very friendly to me. The chair of the meeting, another SWP member, combined with comrade German's filibuster, also ensured I was excluded from speaking from the floor.

Tony Benn, obviously tired from his barnstorming during the anti-war campaign, argued forcefully for the need to combat the emergence of a new American century. Saying this movement was "the most important political movement of my lifetime", comrade Benn said we should not be surprised by the military outcome of the war. What is important is that Iraq is now a US colony and the Americans are the new barbarians. The initial street looting in Baghdad



... but not for STWC

after the collapse of the Ba'athist regime is nothing compared to the US looting of the oil, natural resources and cultural treasures of Iraq.

Comrade Benn said that renewed internationalism, not a new 'Euronationalism', was the antidote to US

aggression. However, these sentiments were tied to the need to respect "international law" and a defence of the UN system - illusions in bourgeois legalism we have come to expect from the veteran socialist campaigner. Displaying a tendency to anti-Americanism, Tony Benn said the only regime change he wanted to see was in Washington. What about London? This was clearly an oversight.

Dr Siddiqui - perhaps surprisingly - made the most politically astute argument of the night. He said that all that had been learnt during this war is that countries down the imperial pecking order actually need to build weapons of mass destruction to avoid being trampled on by the US war machine. So North Korea claims to have nuclear weapons to avoid being swamped by Washington's doctrine of "full spectrum dominance".

Most importantly, Dr Siddiqui said that our main task was to get rid of New Labour. He said to do this our People's Assembly needed to become a standing assembly for the movement to debate and discuss. Our movement was for democracy; further, it needed to be generalised nationally. Organising against the pro-war party included ensuring that the warmongers do not get re-elected, he concluded.

Kate Hudson concentrated on the "illegal" nature of the occupation and on the development of weapons of mass destruction by the United States.

Lindsay German spoke last. She urged those gathered not to doubt that our movement has had a massive impact - in the UK and internationally. Across the world, she said, demonstrators talk of

"Hyde Park" as a touchstone. Quoting from recent newspaper reports, she said that our movement almost forced Blair and his closest cabinet colleagues to resign. We may not have stopped this war, but we have made it more difficult for them to fight the next, she claimed.

Comrade German defended George Galloway. Her only criticism was that he has two houses. While of course we must demand that Galloway is given the benefit of the doubt and defend him against the *Telegraph*'s witch-hunting, that does not mean being uncritical. Tying our flag to his mast is a tactical error, to say the least. According to comrade German, "an attack on George Galloway is an attack on our whole movement". While there is an element of truth here, we should not let Galloway be the defining figure of the anti-war movement.

Comrade German claimed that the most likely explanation is a forgery by British intelligence. A possibility. However, what about the money received from reactionary governments such as Pakistan and a pro-Ba'athist Jordanian businessman? Do we want to be associated with that?

Ironically, Lindsay defended the right to dissent and argued that we must continually fight for that right. It is a pity she does not seem to want to uphold this right within the movement. Without transparency and democracy, our anti-war movement cannot achieve the task suggested by Dr Siddiqui - a thoroughgoing democratic regime change in the UK. Without democracy in the movement, we cannot achieve a democratic society ●

Marcus Ström

## GROUPS

# Anatomy of the hard left

For the tens of thousands of people mobilised against the war on Iraq who have been drawn towards political action for the first time, the myriad of groups on the far left must seem bewildering. **Ian Mahoney** supplies a rough guide to a few of the more prominent

**W**hen people join the Communist Party, we expect them to know what they are signing up for and why - we take ourselves and our recruits seriously, in other words.

An essential part of this is our insistence that comrades are aware of the politics of our opponents on the revolutionary left. Obviously, the *Weekly Worker* reports extensively on the ideas and political activities of other groups. It does this with a partisan slant, of course - we are in the business to win the arguments for a particular approach to politics, not simply to provide a neutral 'news service' to the revolutionary left. However, we understand that this argument is best advanced by honestly presenting the opinions of your opponents - upending straw men is wasted effort.

Thus, all Party committees - from the leadership down - have a standing item on their agendas in which comrades report on the publications of other left trends, assessing strengths and weaknesses in their coverage of political developments, trying - sometimes by almost forensic examination - to glean what the organisation in question is actually thinking, what different trends and tensions are latent in its ranks.

We are not train-spotters, however.

**... the differences that have fractured the left do not justify its division into a series of ineffectual sects**

We actually agree with Lenin that without the politically thinking sections of our class being aware of all the shades of opinion and differences in the fractured revolutionary movement today, we will be incapable of building a unified revolutionary party tomorrow.

This culture stands in stark contrast to most revolutionary groups. For instance, only one of the groups listed below include a link to our website on their own. Most have links to innocuous campaigns, trade unions or bourgeois news sources and their own fraternal organisations in other countries. For example, if you want to learn all about revolutionary politics in German, *Workers Power* - which refused an explicit request for a links-exchange with the CPGB, by the way - helpfully recommends you visit the site of the micro-version of itself in that country, *Arbeitermacht*. It has no links to any other site of a revolutionary organisation in Britain - are they trying to con first-time visitors that WP is the only thing that exists, one wonders? Now that would be frightening...

This sort of behaviour is quite typical, unfortunately. However, it would be a profound mistake to adopt a brand of 'anti-sectarian' sectarianism - the rest of the left is not interested in principled unity and is mostly motivated by sect-

spite, so fuck the lot of 'em!

Yes, the left groups listed below are part of the problem, holding back the political development of valuable activists - but they could also be a vital part of the answer. We urge new readers who have come to our press over the recent period not only to look at what we have to say about them here, but also to study what they have to say about themselves.

We cover four of the five principal supporting organisations of the Socialist Alliance (that is, excluding ourselves, of course), plus the Socialist Party and the Scottish Socialist Party. Between them, these unite the majority of revolutionaries active today outside the Labour Party.

**'Splitters'!**

If they were being honest, seasoned lefties would concede that the scene in wonderful *Monty Python's life of Brian* in which the hero first encounters the People's Front of Judea is depressingly familiar. The location is the Jerusalem Coliseum, and the children's matinee is in full swing. Brian, anxious to dedicate his life to the struggle against Roman occupation, innocently asks a small group of earnest revolutionaries, "Are you the Judean People's Front?"

The leader - the transparently self-

serving Reg - is not impressed: "Fuck off!" he tells the potential new recruit. "Judean People's Front! We're *The People's Front of Judea*! Judean People's Front, god! ... the only people we hate more than the Romans are the fucking Judean People's Front."

The rest of group join in, denouncing a series of other sects - all bearing confusingly similar names - as "splitters!" Eventually, the turn of the Popular Front comes around and one of the group wonders, "Whatever happened to the Popular Front, Reg?" "He's over there," comes the reply and the group unitedly yell a particularly venomous "Splitter!" at a harmless-looking old bloke, sitting quietly on his own in the front row.

Just like in ancient Palestine, the differences that have fractured the contemporary left are not unimportant, but they do not justify the division of the left into a series of ineffectual sects organised on the basis of this or that "shibboleth", as Marx put it. These groups and grouplets replicate effort and largely define themselves by hostility to each other, not the state. The coming together of the organisations described below into a democratically centralised party is long overdue - then perhaps we could start to get some proper work done ●

## 'I'M SO EXCITED' Socialist Workers Party

**Newspaper:** *Socialist Worker* (weekly).

**Other journals:** *International Socialist Journal* (quarterly), *Socialist Review* (monthly).

**Website:** www.swp.org.uk

**Prominent members:** John Rees (seems to be numero uno, takes lead in Socialist Alliance and edits *ISJ*); Lindsay German (Stop the War Coalition convenor and *SR* editor); Rob Hoveman (SA national secretary); Alex Callinicos (responsible for international work through the International Socialist Tendency and authoritative writer); Chris Bambery (national secretary); Paul Foot (campaigning journalist).

**Size:** Claims from the organisation vary from 10,000 to 17,000 card-carriers - in truth, closer to 2,000 'real' members (although 'real' is a relative concept here). The organisation has a policy of carding anyone up, so a question you can expect to be asked after about 30 seconds of first encountering an SWPer is "Would you like to join the party?" "Don't feel that flattered - they ask everybody. They have even asked me ..."

**Comments:** The SWP is deeply unpopular on the left. There are good and bad reasons for this, so it is important that new comrades get a balanced approach to this important organisation. There is a measure of sect-hostility from groups that are essentially SWP-wannabes - less successful organisations lower down the chain who feel they could become the alpha-sect if only the main predator would snuff it.

Also, the origins of many of the smaller Trotskyist/Trotskyoid groups scattered around lie in faction fights and expulsions from the forerunner of the SWP in the 1970s, the International So-

cialists. Thus, a number of the groups below are led by comrades who have been 'scorched' by the SWP's bureaucratic internal regime and bear grudges, of varying degrees of politicisation.

Nevertheless this is the biggest organisation of revolutionaries in the UK, with a talented and stable leadership and a coherent national structure maintained by hundreds of dedicated cadre. Communists have to take such an organisation seriously - we are not like those who believe that 'if only' the SWP simply winked out of existence, the revolutionary left would suddenly be bathed in golden sunshine. For all its crass politics and anti-democratic culture, without this organisation the Stop the War Coalition would be seriously weakened. Similarly, we have important criticisms of the organisation's role in the Socialist Alliance - but it was only the (belated) entry of the SWP into the project that made it viable in any meaningful way.

OK, so much for balance - what about the criticisms?

In truth, the SWP is actually a surprisingly inert and unresponsive organisation. Despite its size, its impact on wider society is absolutely minimal. For instance, it is instructive that - in contrast to the much smaller Socialist Party - this organisation has been incapable of developing genuinely mass working class leaders. It has the - unfortunately deserved - reputation of converting the bulk of its recruits, whatever their particular talents or potentials, into paper-selling dolts. Thus, a *Socialist Worker* paper-seller has featured in *Coronation Street*'s 'Rovers Return' - no one from the street has ever joined. The 'party' has no roots, in other words.

The SWP maintains a relatively high level of political activity, with always the next campaign to be built, the next meeting or march to be mobilised for, normally with organiser Chris Bambery telling everyone how excited he already is by the next action. Yet its field of work is

actually extremely narrow. Where are the SWP's trade union general secretaries, councillors or MPs, the layers it influences and organises in the Labour Party, SWP-influenced theatre or film collectives, etc?

An often politically ignorant membership is prodded from one campaign to another, from one priority to the next. In any political organisation with a functioning democratic culture, such manipulation would provoke criticism, revolt even. Yet, apart from a few individuals here and there, the ranks of the SWP remain remarkably passive. This is achieved through a politically pulverising internal regime. Loyalty to the organisation is defined by political agreement with whatever the current line is - disagreement an act of organisational disloyalty.

The membership is further disenfranchised by the fact that the SWP leadership have made it a point of principle in the past that the organisation does not have a programme. A programme for a Marxist party is not an optional extra. It is the means by which we test our day-to-day practice against our overall strategic aims, our fundamental political principles.

The SWP line has performed some pretty spectacular somersaults over the years, yet there is no political compass in the organisation, no collective means of gauging how far the leadership has strayed off course.

Thus politics for the SWP consists in adapting itself to prevailing moods in society, attempting to give a left coloration to the existing consciousness of the class. One day, this can mean that it will flirt with Labourism, the next it will adopt blood-curdling anarchist calls to 'fuck capitalism'! - it all depends whether it is on the streets of some council estate canvassing for votes wearing its Socialist Alliance hat or in an expansive piazza of a European city alongside the anarchist black bloc ●



Hatton: leading Liverpool council for Militant

## 'COULD HAVE BEEN A CONTENDER' Socialist Party

**Newspaper:** *The Socialist* (weekly).

**Other journals:** *Socialism Today* (monthly).

**Website:** www.socialistparty.org.uk

**Prominent members:** Peter Taaffe (general secretary), Roger Bannister (leading member of Unison), Dave Nellist (ex-Labour MP and today a councillor in Coventry).

**Size:** Hard to tell, but probably in the region of 200 to 300 genuine members, with a small periphery, some of whom may be formal members, some not.

**Comments:** Today's Socialist Party is what is left over after the once (relatively) mighty Militant Tendency crashed and burned. Viewing the collapse of bureaucratic socialism in the USSR and eastern Europe in the early 1990s, Peter Taaffe, a

leader of Militant and today the head of the Socialist Party, predicted the coming decade would be "the red 90s". Actually, it ran red with the blood of the Socialist Party/Militant, as important bits of it dropped off throughout that decade.

Militant originated in the primeval swamp of British Trotskyism in the 1930s, associated with the South African Marxist, Ted Grant. For 40 years, Militant and its forerunner, the Revolutionary Socialist League, existed inside the Labour Party as 'deep entryists' - Trotskyist moles burrowing away for influence inside the structures of the party.

Undoubtedly, Militant was eventually the most successful of the groups undertaking this sort of work. When the newspaper *Militant* was launched in 1964, it was an obscure four-page monthly. Largely by default - its rivals inside the party either left or split - Militant grew prodigiously. By the early 1990s, it could plausibly refer to itself as the "largest organised force on the left". It claimed

the allegiance of three Labour MPs, numerous Labour councillors and a layer of trade union officials; it ran the highly effective anti-poll tax campaign that was instrumental in the fall of Margaret Thatcher; in the 1980s it ran Liverpool city council which was a thorn in the side of the Tory government, and was dominant in the Labour Party's youth section.

The process of seeking influence through Labour promoted a political degeneration of the group, however. It progressively dropped its revolutionary politics and became *Labourised*. Thus, by 1990 it was rubbishing the idea that it stood for revolution. Socialism would come, one wet Wednesday afternoon perhaps, through "an enabling bill in parliament", which would nationalise "the top 200 monopolies" (Militant *What we stand for* 1990, p8). All other groups were rubbished as "the sects". Political issues such as the fight for women's and gay rights or the national question in the UK were dismissed as "diversions" and a narrow 'workerist' approach to politics systematically cultivated.

Yet even at the height of the organisation's success there were some big political time bombs ticking away inside it. Witch-hunted by Kinnock and tempted by what looked like richer pickings outside Labour in the early 1990s, the majority of the organisation broke *organisationally* from Labour (but still not from *Labourism*).

In the course of this change, of course, the organisation split from Ted Grant - its founder and political leader for decades. Instructively, this important political battle was actually fought out via leaked documents to *The Guardian*. In common with much of the left, Militant/SP ban honest and clean public debate of the differences in its ranks - members are bound by an oath of silence, a travesty of the type of genuine party democracy that Lenin, Marx and the founders of our movement practised.

The split complete, life outside the Labour Party proved a little tougher than anticipated. Throughout the "red 90s" the SP in its various manifestations suffered loss after loss - just about its whole Scottish section (which went on to form the core of today's Scottish Socialist Party), most of its organisation in Liverpool, its section in Pakistan, etc. There were numerous walkouts and expulsions. Membership plummeted. Yet no debate

on this crisis was featured in the pages of *The Socialist* - only the *Weekly Worker* comprehensively covered the issues involved in the fragmentation of this once important working class organisation.

Today, the SP's leader - Peter Taaffe - is probably quite pleased with himself. For now, the haemorrhaging of members has been halted. The group managed to stage an organised withdrawal from the Socialist Alliance (a move precipitated by nothing other than sectarian resentment of the much bigger SWP) without leaving bits of itself behind. Yet it still has those time bombs ticking away.

Take the Labour Party. It never understood the true nature of Labour when it was deeply imbedded in the organisation, inventing a 'socialist' history for the party of Kinnock, Blair and Ramsay MacDonald and denouncing others as "sects" for not burying themselves beside them.

Today, it justifies its organisational separation from Labour by telling us that the party is now a totally different beast - apparently it is now simply a "bourgeois party" with no working class content whatsoever. Of course, such a self-serving lie may work for the time being; but any serious revival of the Labour left would thoroughly disorientate Taaffe's troops.

A real merit of the Militant tradition has been its ability to nurture genuine working class leaders - comrades such as Tommy Sheridan, Dave Nellist and even Derek Hatton (leader of Liverpool council in his time). Yet without a coherent Marxist programme this sect is constantly frayed by centrifugal tensions, strains and splits - as dramatically illustrated throughout Taaffe blood-soaked 90s.

For the time being, the SP seems stable and content with the niche it has settled into. History has not finished taking its revenge, however, despite the comprehensive going-over dishd out to it already ●

## 'GOING CAMPING' Alliance for Workers' Liberty

**Newspaper:** *Solidarity* (fortnightly).  
**Other journals:** *Workers' Liberty* (a leisurely quarterly).  
**Website:** www.workersliberty.org.uk

**Prominent members:** Sean Matgamna; Martin Thomas (member of the Socialist Alliance executive); Mark Osborn.

**Size:** Around 100 members, with a small periphery beyond that.

**Comments:** Origins in the International Socialists. From 1974 onwards, became a Labour Party entryist group.

Like Militant, this orientation often took the form of adaptation to *Labourism* and a 'soft focus' presentation of the history of this counterrevolutionary party. Politically, the group always had a 'hard' attitude to Stalinism and the countries of bureaucratic socialism, even while it formally adhered to the Trotskyist orthodoxy that these places were 'workers' states' of some sort. In 1988, the contradiction was resolved when this theory was ditched - although the AWL still refers to itself as "Trotskyist" - and the organisation adopted the view that these societies were "systems of class exploitation which represent a dead-end episode within the era of capitalism" (AWL website).

Essentially, the AWL attempts to position itself as a 'third campist' trend. (The first camp being imperialism, the second Stalinism and the third camp that of the working class and independent proletarian politics.) However, characteristic of the AWL throughout its 'third camp' manifestation has been slippage - it constantly veers towards the first camp and a fatal softness on oppressor peoples.

Thus, it correctly calls for a two-state solution in the Israel-Palestine conflict, but this then leads AWLer Martin Thomas to self-define as "a little bit Zionist" - a shocking thing for a Marxist to say. Similarly, the group's correct observation that a British-Irish entity should have the right to self-determination within the context of a united Ireland caused it to equate the republican movement with fascistic loyalist terror gangs. This also led to illusions in the democratic pretensions of imperialism - a potentially fatal weakness, as we move into a period of more military adventures of the US and its allies.

The AWL often exhibits the sort of mindlessly bellicose hostility to other revolutionary groups that does so much to discredit the left in the eyes of advanced workers. It is SWP-phobic, for example. Its relations with our organisation have so far been divided into two peri-

ods. First, exploratory discussions to convince us that we *were* Trotskyists, *really*. In fact, if we thought about it seriously, we would find we were the AWL in exile, as it was the only *genuine* bunch of Trotskyists anyway. When this approach predictably failed, a second tactic was wheeled out. Draw artificial lines of demarcation between the two groups - and try a membership raid. All very tedious and - frankly - rather unambitious ●

## 'PIPE AND SLIPPERS' International Socialist Group

**Newspaper:** *Resistance* (a co-sponsored monthly).

**Other journals:** *International Viewpoint*, journal of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

**Website:** www.zoo.co.uk/~z8001063/International-Socialist-Group

**Prominent members:** Alan Thornett (member of SA executive); Greg Tucker (a leading militant in the RMT rail union).

**Size:** Up to 100 members, I have been informed, but that is hard to believe.

**Comments:** Harmless, inert group. Official section of the Fourth International in Britain - although that is much less impressive than it sounds. Via a whole series of splits, realignments and cruel historical ironies, this is what remains of the dynamic but politically unstable, student-based International Marxist Group, which was prominent in the anti-Vietnam war movement of the 1960s and led - amongst others - by Tariq Ali.

In more recent years, the ISG has constituted itself as apologist for the SWP's more crass manoeuvres in the Socialist Alliance and there were even negotiations about the ISG joining the SWP. These broke down over faction rights. The ISG and its 'international' adhere to a formally democratic approach to party culture, with rights for open factions - obviously not acceptable to the bureaucratic SWP mandarins, so that was the end of that. For the time being, at least.

The ISG has recently become more impatient with the SWP role in becalming the Socialist Alliance project. It too wants to see a party result from the process - although a democratic centralist, revolutionary communist party is not what it has in mind.

## 'WORKERS POWER, INNIT?' Workers Power

**Newspaper:** *Workers Power* (monthly).

**Other journals:** *Revolution* (as and when) - paper of the formally "independent" youth group "in political solidarity" with WP.

**Website:** www.workerspower.com

**Prominent members:** Mark Hoskisson (member of SA executive); Dave Stockton; Keith Hassle.

**Size:** Probably between 40 and 50 domestically, perhaps a couple of hundred worldwide, when you tot up the numbers in its recently rebranded international grouping, the League for a Fifth International.

**Comments:** Originated in the International Socialists faction fights of the 1970s. Briefly fused with what went on to become the AWL (although the claim on the AWL website that WP is to "a considerable extent our creation" seems a little overblown). Has undergone a number of political u-turns over the years - no sin in itself, of course. But - like much of the left - it has simply *announced* these fundamental changes in its world view.

Take, for example, the group's view on the USSR. In 1998, after a clandestine "five-year debate" inside WP and amongst its international co-thinkers, readers of the organisation's since defunct *Trotskyist International* had a whole new world view sprung on them in the January-June issue. This

revelatory article informed us that "under the impact of events in eastern Europe" from 1989 onwards, "some members of the former majority" in the organisation "joined the old minority" after the debate "broke out anew in 1993".

But what of the *content* of the debate - by what process of logical development did the minority become a majority? Exactly how and why did people change their minds? What had become the minority view simply gently slipped into the depths. Workers Power had a new, *binding* 'line' on the nature of the eastern European states after World War II. Our world had changed for ever - and we never knew how, or why.

The group is amiable enough, although pretty undynamic. It seems to spend huge amounts of time, effort and cash travelling around the world building its 'international'. Similarly, it has put a relatively huge political investment into the Revvo youth group.

It is very hard not to be quite cynical about this venture. Essentially, it seems to consist of WP cadre running an undemocratic youth group behind the scenes, while a pretence of 'independence' is maintained. The charade is not designed to actually organise youth in the movement.

If you are raw off some demonstration, fine; the young cadre of other serious political organisations are not especially welcome, however. Clearly a device for recruitment to WP - nothing more.

In its quite desperate attempt to grow, WP has wobbled in the direction of tailing some of the anarchist elements in the 'anti-capitalist movement' - a potentially serious development for such a small group defined for so much of its existence by an adherence to a 'hard' version of orthodox Trotskyism ●

## EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW? Scottish Socialist Party

**Newspaper:** *Scottish Socialist Voice* (weekly).

**Website:** www.scottishsocialistparty.org

**Prominent members:** Tommy Sheridan (national convenor and member of the Scottish parliament), Alan McCombes (editor *SSV*), Allan Green (national secretary).

**Size:** Between 2,000 and 3,000.

**Comments:** Unlike its all-Britain counterparts based in London, the SSP has made a real impact north of the border. Its vote has steadily risen and it looks set to send a batch of representatives to sit alongside Tommy Sheridan in the Scottish parliament after the May 1 elections.

Whereas the SWP has fought shy of leading the Socialist Alliance in England and Wales along the road to becoming an inclusive party, that is precisely what Scottish Militant Labour did within the Scottish Socialist Alliance in the late 1990s. In comrade Sheridan's words, the coming together of the left groups produced something that was much bigger than "the sum of its parts". So much so that even the SWP (belatedly) felt obliged to take its members in Scotland into the SSP.

Factions - or platforms - are constitutionally permitted, although party guidelines state that platform publications should only be distributed internally, not publicly. Nevertheless, members enjoy a regime of openness that is largely lacking south of the border.

However, in its current form the SSP cannot become the model for the kind of left unity we need, since it has bought into Scottish nationalism hook, line and sinker. To be able to take on and defeat the UK state the working class needs an all-Britain, revolutionary party, not a formation which demands the break-up of Britain as a matter of principle and envisages a reformist socialism in one tiny country ●

# What is 'sectarianism'?

**Comrades who have been around the left for longer than a week will have certainly heard the word 'sectarian' applied to this or that group in the movement. It functions as a generic insult and will have different content depending on who is saying it about whom. Here are a few variations:**  
● "The SWP is sectarian". As used by groups such as Workers Power or the Socialist Party, this should be taken to mean - 'The SWP is bigger and more successful than us. It treats its smaller rivals on the left with contempt and appears to regard little other than recruitment to itself as of importance - ie, exactly the same way that we would like to act if only we were big enough.'  
● "Workers Power and the Socialist Party are sectarians" - in the lexicon of the SWP this means, 'They're smaller than us'.  
● "The CPGB is sectarian". Actually quite a common charge, what this actually means is - 'When the *Weekly Worker* criticises other political groups and trends in the workers' movement, I read it with interest, generally believe the facts it cites and - indeed - will myself often use the information it supplies in my political work. When it attacks

**my group, it is a sectarian smear, an inaccurate, malicious and thoroughly despicable fabrication by a disreputable gossip rag that no one in the workers' movement gives an ounce of credibility to.'**

**Actually, sectarianism entails putting the narrow interests of your particular group - whatever its size - above the general interests of the working class. Communism is the product of the conscious movement of the class itself; it is not the outcome of the victory of this or that little group organised around this or that ideological article of faith. The CPGB regards the general culture of the left to be sectarian. Just look at the common themes that have emerged in our survey:**  
● Almost all treat politics as *conspiracy*, something that takes place behind the backs of workers. Thus, most groups do not report the political debates that take place in their ranks, still less the controversies and differences that animate the broader movement. I was once told that this would only "confuse the workers" - and we wouldn't want to do that, would we? So the deadly dull press of the majority of the left consists of variations on the dull themes of 'Life is hard if you're a

**worker'; 'Imperialism is a very bad thing - look, here are some foreigners suffering'; 'Tony Blair is not a friend of the workers.' Scoop!**  
● This necessitates not simply the centralisation of the agreed activities of the members of these groups. It entails the centralisation of the ideas of the organisation. It becomes a matter of discipline for sect members to defend the views of the majority in public, whether they believe them or not, whether they are on an agreed action such as a demonstration that would require a degree of self-effacing discipline or sitting, half-cut, in a pub with you.

**In contrast, we agree with that well known 'sectarian', Lenin, when he said that "there can be no mass party, no party of the class, without full clarity of essential shadings, without an open struggle between the various tendencies, without informing the masses as to which leaders are pursuing this or that line. Without this, a party worthy of the name cannot be built, and we are building it."**

**And - in the course of the battle against debilitating sectarianism of the left in Britain - so are we ...●**

Mark Fischer

## MAY DAYS

# A day of celebration and



**F**or over a hundred years, May Day has been our most important working class festival, marked by demonstrations celebrating the strength of the workers' movement and demanding better wages and conditions for working people.

Originally a pagan celebration of the start of summer, May Day is possibly the most ancient religious festival in the northern hemisphere, marked in different cultures by a variety of ritual practices. Human sacrifice to a death/fertility goddess was practiced until the 1st century BC. As nature became less fearsome, and more cultivated, the nature goddess became less powerful and the rites became less bloodthirsty. Although it was chosen by the early christian authorities as a day to honour Philip and James - two saints who it was thought might appeal especially to the lower orders, who celebrated May Day - unlike other special days in the pagan year May Day was never incorporated into the official calendar by being reinvented as a major christian feast.

Nevertheless in medieval times May Day remained the favourite holiday of many English villages. No work was done, authority was mocked and ignored, and temporary sexual liaisons unsanctioned by church and state were enjoyed, along with much drunkenness and revelry. People gathered spring flowers to decorate their homes and danced around a maypole or 'totem', holding the ends of ribbons that streamed from its top. The earliest known picture of a maypole is taken from a drawing of a window in Betley Hall, Staffordshire, England, erected in the mid-1460s during the rule of Edward IV.

Other European countries had their own May Day customs. In Italy, youths serenaded their sweethearts. In Switzerland, a May pine tree was placed under a young woman's window. A German man would secretly plant a May tree in front of the window of his heart's desire. In the Czech lands, youths placed maypoles before their valentine's home at night.

As capitalism emerged in Britain, the ruling class abolished large numbers of feast and holy days as a way of increasing the amount of work done, and thus the absolute surplus

**Fuse anti-war and working class movements**

**May Day became less and less a demonstration of working class independence and the fight for human liberation**

value extracted from the producers. They also strove to impose the disciplines of timekeeping and their 'work ethic' on their labourers. As early as 1550 an act of parliament demanded that maypoles be destroyed, and outlawed games. Philip Stubbs, in *Anatomy of abuses* (1585) wrote: "... and then fall they to banquet and feast, to leape and daunce about it, as the heathen people did at the dedication of their idoles."

In 1644 the puritans in England abolished May Day altogether. For them the festival was an obnoxious example of paganism and worldliness. One of them wrote a propaganda work called *Funebria Florae, or the downfall of the May games*. He attacked "ignorants, atheists, papists, drunkards, swearers, swashbucklers, maid-marians, morrice-dancers, maskers, mummers, maypole stealers, health-drinkers, together with a rapsallion rout of fiddlers, fools, fighters, gamesters, lewd women, light women, contemners of magistracy, affronters of ministry, disobedients to parents, mispenders of time, and abusers of the creature, etc."

May Day continued to be celebrated by the common people in defiance of church and state authority and, when the industrial revolution began to concentrate them in factories, the focus of May Day resistance shifted from opposition to enclosures and other encroachments on ancient rights to a struggle for better working conditions, higher wages and a shorter working day.

The association of the international workers' movement with May Day began in the USA in 1886, when the revolutionary Knights of Labour organisation and socialist trade unions called for a strike on May 1 to fight for an eight-hour day.

Two years earlier, in 1884, the convention of the Federation of Organised Trades raised a resolution that was to act as a beacon to the whole working class: "That eight hours shall constitute a legal days labour from and after May 1 1886". This call was taken up by the labour movement with the creation of Eight Hour Leagues, which won significant concessions out of the bosses, and produced a doubling of trade union membership. On May 1

1886, the American Federation of Labor declared a national strike to demand an eight-hour working day and 350,000 workers across the country responded. In particular, the city of Chicago was virtually paralysed: railroads, stockyards, and other businesses were forced to close.

Thousands of migrants, many from Germany, had poured into Chicago after the American Civil War, and by the 1880s it was already a focus of industrialisation, and a hotbed of class struggle. In 1855 the Chicago police used Gatling guns against the workers who protested against the closing of the beer gardens. In the Bread Riot of 1872 the police clubbed hungry people in a tunnel under the river. In the 1877 railway strike, federal troops fought workers at the 'Battle of the Viaduct'. Workers employed by Cyrus McCormick, who manufactured mechanical reapers, started the movement for an eight-hour day when they went on strike on May Day 1867.

During the May Day 1886 strike Chicago police fired randomly into crowds of strikers. Four molders whom McCormick locked out were shot dead. Angry workers began to call for armed retaliation. On May 4 1886 several thousand people gathered near Haymarket Square to hear August Spies, a newspaperman, speak about the shootings at the McCormick works. Albert Parsons, a typographer and labour leader, also spoke. (Later, at his trial, he said: "What is socialism or anarchism? Briefly stated it is the right of the toilers to the free and equal use of the tools of production and the right of the producers to their product.")

He was followed by 'Good-Natured Sam' Fielden, who as a child had worked in the textile factories of Lancashire. He was a methodist preacher and labour organiser. By the time he finished speaking the numbers had dwindled. Nevertheless 176 policemen were ordered in to scatter the crowd. A stick of dynamite was thrown, killing seven policemen and injuring 10 times as many. The police responded by shooting at the demonstrators, killing several and injuring over 200.

In the following weeks, the police carried

out systematic raids on strikers and trade unionists, breaking up meetings with violence. With no clues as to the source of the bomb, police arrested eight revolutionary labour leaders, seven of whom had not even been present in Haymarket at the time. In the absence of any evidence linking them to the bomb, the 'Chicago Eight' were tried solely on the basis of their political beliefs. Four were hanged on Black Friday - November 11 1887.

Lucy Parsons was the widow of one of them. She set out to tell the world the true story of her husband, "whose only crime was that he lived in advance of his time". She went to England and encouraged English workers to make May Day an international holiday for shortening the hours of work. Her friend, William Morris, wrote a poem around this time:

*Workers*

They are few, we are many:  
and yet, O our mother,  
Many years were wordless  
and nought was our deed,  
But now the word flitteth  
from brother to brother:  
We have furrowed the acres  
and scattered the seed.

*Earth*

Win on then unyielding,  
through fair and foul weather,  
And pass not a day  
that your deed shall avail.  
And in hope every spring-tide  
come gather together  
That unto the Earth  
ye may tell all your tale.

The Second International was founded in 1889, under the banner of workers' internationalism. A key resolution of the first congress, proposed by the American labour federation, was that in memory of the Chicago martyrs, workers in every country would strike and demonstrate for the eight-hour day every May 1, which would become known as international workers' day, a day of international working class solidarity.

On May Day 1890 workers struck all over Europe, with 100,000 demonstrating in Barcelona, 120,000 in Stockholm, and 8,000 in War-

# hope

saw. Thousands stayed at home in Austria and Hungary, where demonstrations were banned. Strikes spread throughout Italy and France. Ten workers were shot dead in northern France. In the words of the Austrian social democratic leader, Adler, “Entire layers of the working class with which we would otherwise have made no contact have been shaken out of their lethargy.” In Britain and Germany, huge demonstrations were held on the Sunday following.

Although they had not all taken place on May Day itself, the importance of these demonstrations was not lost on Frederick Engels, who had witnessed the political lull in the British labour movement since the great Chartist days of the 1840s: “More than 100,000 in a column, on May 4 1890, the English working class joined up in the great international army, its long winter sleep broken at last. The grandchildren of the old Chartists are entering the line of battle.”

In Europe in the early years of the 20th century May Day demonstrations were often the scenes of violent clashes between workers and state forces. In Poland in 1905, 100 people were killed when tsarist troops opened fire on a Warsaw demonstration. Polish nationalist/socialist leaders immediately called a general strike, although a few days later they urged workers to return to work, claiming that conditions were not yet ripe for revolution. The May Day massacre, and suppression of workers’ protests in Russia, spurred on seven east European socialist parties, including those of Poland, Georgia, Finland and Armenia, to unite in a fighting committee based in Switzerland, to work cooperatively for workers’ rights, freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and association, universal suffrage and constituent assemblies. Tsar Nicholas II was forced by the revolutionary situation in Russia to grant some of these demands in October of that year.

Thus May Day was highly significant for the Bolsheviks. Lenin had penned an important May Day pamphlet for the Russian factory workers in 1896, and in response to the May Day demonstrations in Kharkov in 1900 he wrote about the need for a revolutionary organisation to lead the workers.

In the early years of Soviet power May 1 was seen as symbolising the triumph of the working class, and it became a big national celebration, second in importance only to the anniversary of the revolution of November 7. Subsequently May Day was transformed into an official holiday. Naturally the outer trappings of May Day were usurped by the Stalinite regime and became a celebration of state power and military might. This kind of May Day was observed in the Soviet Union until its collapse in 1991. ‘Official’ communists yearning for the good old days still march in Moscow and other Russian cities on May Day.

Tragically since the 1920s the working class movement has suffered a worldwide setback. Class independence was subsumed by pro-capitalist social democracy on the one hand and pro-Stalin ‘official communism’ on the other. May Day became less and less a demonstration of working class independence and the fight for human liberation. More and more a contest between the competing anti-working class ideologies. This was not a straightforward process. After all ‘official communism’ was a highly contradictory phenomenon. Programmatically it dreamt of reproducing the USSR’s bureaucratic socialism, often through some kind of parliamentary road. At the same time its militants organised and gave leadership to political struggles, not least in the field of trade unions.

May Day reflected this contradiction. Once again the USA led the way. President Grover Cleveland tried to separate off US workers

from the international working class by announcing that the first Monday in September would be Labour Day in America, a date selected to reject any identification with socialism and communism. However, neither labour militancy nor public interest in May Day celebrations in America showed any signs of abating in the 1920s and 30s. May Day rallies were still held, for example, in New York City’s Union Square every year.

Clearly then the simple displacement of Labour Day to September was not sufficient for the US ruling class: conservatives began renaming May Day in an effort to finally erase this unsettling symbol of working class consciousness. In 1947, amidst the anti-communist cold war hysteria, the US Veterans of Foreign Wars renamed May 1 ‘Loyalty Day’ and a joint session of Congress later made the pronouncement official.

Loyalty Day was explicitly designed as a weapon against labour, and specifically the Communist Party of USA, by encouraging citizens to reaffirm their commitment to the state.

During the 1950s, Loyalty Day flourished at the expense of traditional May Day events. For example, the Loyalty Day parade in New York City, one of the largest in the country, was designed to lure citizens away from the long-standing Union Square rallies and to distract attention from the Communist Party-sponsored march on the same day.

Ten years later, however, the association of such parades with support for the American war in Vietnam led to a drastic decline in public participation across the USA. Nevertheless, despite this waning interest, these conservative holidays actually succeeded in their objective; for, if Loyalty Day has now been all but officially forgotten, so has the meaning and American origin of International Workers’ Day ●

Mary Godwin

# Rewinning our day

The motive force and backbone of May Day mobilisations in Britain has throughout most of the 20th century traditionally been supplied by the CPGB and its allies. The annual demonstrations acted as a barometer measuring all strands of working class struggle. The steady decrease in the numbers mobilised on May Day during the 1970s and 1980s reflected the decline of the revolutionary left, and the ideological and organisational weakness of the CPGB. Turkish and Kurdish left groups have come to provide the biggest and most militant contingents in recent years, with their revolutionary music, chants, banners and flags. (It must be said that the isolation of these groups from the British working class movement has been a major strategic error.)

May 1 has long been a public holiday in most European countries, where demonstrations have often been taken over by reformist parties and governments. As it had by linking Saint Phillip and Saint James to the original pagan festival, the catholic church has attempted to ‘christianify’ May Day, declaring it the feast day of Saint Joseph the Worker. In Britain, the Wilson government finally acceded in 1975 to the long-standing demand for a May Day bank holiday, but it chose the first Monday in May, rather than May Day itself.

Even this was too much for rightwing sections of the establishment and ever since they have called for this alien, socialist holiday to be abolished and replaced by a holiday in the autumn - perhaps Winston Churchill’s birthday or

even Margaret Thatcher’s. The Tory government in the early 1990s considered abolishing the May Day bank holiday on the grounds that it disrupted business and honoured socialism, but they knew that depriving workers of a day off would not be popular, especially since Britain has fewer public holidays annually than most European countries.

For the British establishment years when May Day fell on a Monday and thus coincided with the bank holiday have been particularly distasteful. In 1995 the Tory government neatly avoided the unseemly spectacle of British workers having a day off on a socialist holiday by moving the bank holiday to May 8 and declaring that it was a holiday to commemorate VE day, the liberation of Europe from Nazi occupation in 1945. Veterans of World War II were granted cut-price train tickets to get to London for celebratory events.

In 2000 May Day was again on a Monday, and this bank holiday saw the impotence of the rightwing trade union leadership on full display. The TUC proved how completely the official labour movement has been neutered by eschewing any march or demonstration in favour of a ‘TUC May Day in the Millennium Dome’. For £10 a head trade union members could attend special union events in the dome designed to “celebrate Britain’s racial and cultural diversity, speak out against low pay, and promote trade unionism”.

Meanwhile, anarchists and militant environmentalists organised a completely separate ‘guerrilla gardening’ protest - a conscious return to the agricultural

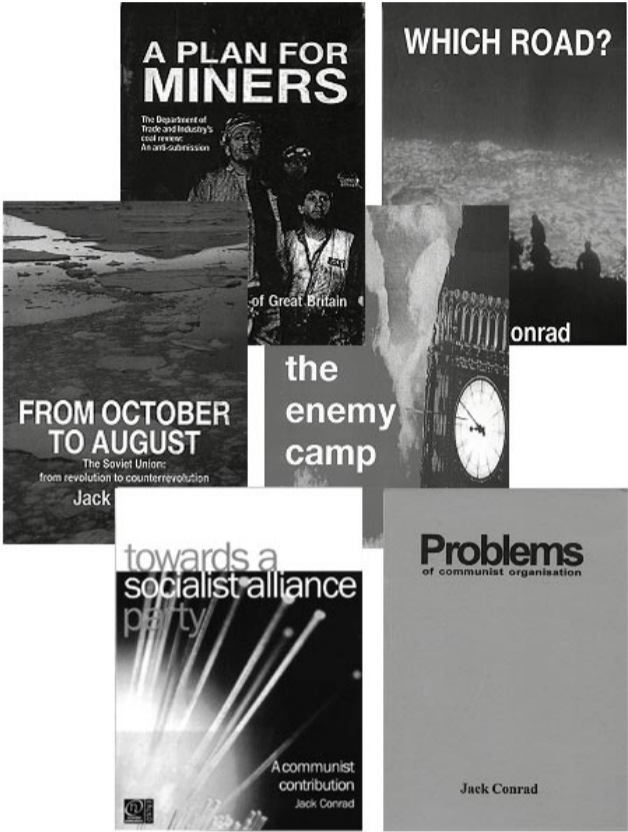
origins of May Day, planting flowers and seeds in Parliament Square and generally turning it into a tip. This protest was backed by an array of disaffected youth, alienated by bourgeois society and its commodified values. A handful symbolised their opposition to capitalism by smashing up a McDonald’s and breaking a few windows, as well as daubing a statue of Winston Churchill and the Cenotaph.

The establishment exacted their revenge the next year: in 2001, the police lured several thousand young marchers into a trap - they were held in the pouring rain for seven hours at Oxford Circus.

This year’s May Day takes places in the direct aftermath of the conquest of Iraq by the US-UK coalition. What has been of particular significance and bodes so well for the future are two things. Firstly, demonstrations against the war, especially before the fighting broke out, were huge. Numbers were counted in their hundreds of thousands and millions. Two million in London, five million in Spain, etc. Secondly, they were coordinated internationally. People marched on the same day across the whole world. Internationalism lives and is growing.

The shadow of the Soviet Union and its perversion of communism are being left behind. Capitalist triumphalism is being answered by a new movement and a new generation. The anti-war movement and the workers’ movement must be brought together. We must reclaim May Day. It belongs to those who want a world without war. It belongs to those who want to end wage slavery. It belongs to those who want to see a world fit for human beings ●

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## EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM

# Bureaucracy and confusion

Over the weekend of April 27-28 some 350 people from 180 organisations attended the latest gathering to prepare for the 2003 European Social Forum in Paris (November 12-16). This time it was the turn of Berlin to act as host. **Tina Becker** reports



**N**ational stereotypes - however crude and insulting they often are - reflect certain real aspects of cultures. British people are reserved and painfully polite; Italians are emotional and anything but polite and, well, Germans tell crap jokes, but at least they are efficient and well organised.

While I can confirm that in Germany trains do run on time and the streets are definitely cleaner than in Britain, the German left is unfortunately trying hard to escape the typical stereotype. Not that they have a sense of humour - if only! But the bit about efficiency has certainly been successfully dumped.

Firstly, the latest preparatory meeting took place in a different building from the advertised one, which meant large numbers arrived late. Then there were insufficient copies of proposals and discussion papers and some only arrived after they had been 'discussed' by the meeting. To add to the chaos, the lights in the hall kept failing and comrades sat through several spells of total darkness. On the second day, the meeting was switched to a totally new venue, again without informing comrades about this properly. Many missed the brief announcement right at the end of the first day and waited patiently in front of the other hall. In short - it was quite a mess.

Not that it was the fault of the comrades from the German ESF alone. They are still in the early stages of their development and or-

ganisational responsibility always lies with the same three people. The problem was that the main discussion had taken place in the workshops, on the Thursday and Friday. But only 100 or so people had been able to take time off work and spend four days in Berlin. The other 250 only witnessed so-called 'report-back' meetings, which quickly deteriorated into unfocused and rambling 'debates' about anything and nothing.

For most people, these meetings were the only opportunity to make their voice heard - so many spoke about matters unrelated to the particular item on the agenda. There were no standing orders on speaking time and the German chair did not dare to cut people off. This only changed on the second day, when comrade Jonathan Neale from the Socialist Workers Party took the chair: he adopted precisely the opposite policy of interrupting people after two minutes.

While the assembly itself was a pretty disappointing and boring event, some good steps seem to have been taken in the workshops that preceded it. No doubt though, the real decisions are being made on a totally different level. The Italian comrades, most of them members of Rifondazione Comunista, the Democratic Left and the trade union Cobas, seem to have been successful in lobbying the French comrades to make some changes to their plans for the ESF 2003.

At the last assembly meeting in Brussels on February 8-9, the French and Italian com-

rades openly clashed over the idea of establishing permanent ESF networks. The Italians - supported by everybody else, apart from the French - argued that the successful anti-war network that went on to organise the global protests on February 15 showed the way forward. They quite rightly stated that the left must organise on a qualitatively higher level if we want to be able to challenge the European Union - let alone stopping a war. They argued for networks of "the social movements" on a range of subjects.

Incredibly, the French disagreed. French comrades argued in unison against this active approach to building networks. Led by Pierre Khalfa, official representative of Attac France (and a member of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire), the comrades stated that there were "some organisations involved in the ESF process that do not want to be part of the social movements". Apparently, those organisations want to come to the ESF and sponsor it, but they do not want to build effective European-wide organisations that could strengthen our forces.

Under the guidance of Rifondazione, the first ESF in November 2002 was - although slightly chaotic in its attempt to bow before the 'anti-capitalist movement' - in reality a gathering of the left and sections of the European organised working class. Florence saw revolutionary parties, trade unions and large numbers of militant youth make real headway in uniting across Europe. But rather than building on this success and further strengthening our forces across the continent, the French mobilisation committee was attempting to make the ESF 2003 more diffuse and more attractive to reformist forces, NGOs and the trade union bureaucracy (see *Weekly Worker* February 12).

At the Berlin meeting, the French comrades seem to have changed their tune. Comrade Khalfa presented an item on 'relationship with the movements', in which he talked about fusing the "social movements and the social forum" and called on the ESF to organise networks on a range of subjects - ie, exactly the opposite of what the comrades demanded in February.

However, there still seems to be a certain level of confusion and lack of clarity about the role of those networks. While comrades from Italy talked about the establishment of *per-*

**Preparing: sometimes in complete darkness**

**Florence saw revolutionary parties, trade unions and large numbers of militant youth make real headway in uniting across Europe**

manent networks that also function, meet and organise outside the ESF, the French comrade in charge of setting up a working group on this subject claims that "this is simply about having one meeting at the end of the forum in November, where the various social movements can assemble".

Another aspect that still awaits clarification is the role of political parties. The French comrades want to strictly implement the World Social Forum 'rule' that limits the role of parties to that of observers. A truly dishonest ban, as the WSF is being run and financed by the Workers Party of Brazil. Similarly in France, where the leading organisers of the ESF are members of the LCR, the French Communist Party (PCF) and the Socialist Party.

It seems the comrades are united in not wanting to build an international rival organisation to Attac, which has successfully taken off in a number of European countries. The LCR, PCF and SP are all involved in Attac - which, with 40,000 mostly young members, is much more successful in picking up new recruits than their own organisations.

Political parties are not allowed to take part in the French ESF mobilising committee at all - although the committee is clearly dominated by those three organisations. It seems the comrades even want to prevent workshops - last year they were really the only events in which political groups like ourselves were able to put forward our ideas.

The Italian comrades, however, seem optimistic that last year's method of incorporating political parties will again be adopted in Paris: where a party is involved in the ESF process on a national level, they can take part in the ESF. This is far from satisfactory. What, for example, if the majority of a national ESF committee does not allow a party on board? Is it inconceivable that the SWP might decide to use its numerical strength to exclude unwanted rivals from the English ESF, while wearing its 'Globalise Resistance' hat? All in the name of adhering to the 'rule' of the WSF, of course.

Also, it is far from clear that the French comrades are prepared to accept this status quo. Fortunately, the next ESF preparatory assembly will take place in Genoa on July 18-19. This might be an ideal opportunity to openly challenge their misleadership ●

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# in Berlin

**Luciano Muhlbauer** is the representative of the Italian trade union Cobas at the ESF. He is also a prominent member of Rifondazione Comunista. Tina Becker spoke to him.

**A**t the last ESF preparatory meeting the French comrades were not keen on the idea of networks. How is it that this time they argued for them?

We had some very useful discussions. We all agree that the social forum cannot be just one single moment every year. Just like the World Social Forum, it needs to be linked to the various movements that have developed across the world: the anti-war movement, the anti-capitalist movement, etc. The forum needs to be part of the process to remake the left.

The WSF came into being because of the anti-capitalist movement in Seattle; the ESF took place in Florence, because of the events in Genoa. Now we need to develop structures of permanent action for the participants.

**Why do you make such a distinction between what you call “the movement” and people who come to the ESF?**

There is still a difference between the forum and the movement. In the forums, everybody who is against neoliberalism, war and racism can participate. Some organisations do not want to or cannot organise activities. Some are prohibited by their status as a charity or a trade union from doing various things. And others are simply dubious and wary of the organisations of the left. Therefore the forum should be an open space, a space where we do not take votes or agree on certain actions.

At the same time we need another space for activity and organisation within this open forum. A space where those who want to can organise joint campaigns. Just like when we agreed in Florence to organise the European-wide anti-war demonstrations on February 15. The WSF adopted it afterwards and made it a global event.

Now our task is to organise a better and closer relationship between those organisational spaces and the rest of the forum. During the seminars and the plenary sessions we should also talk about setting up networks - we do not just need moments: we need a whole process. There are some networks already organising - the anti-war network, for a start. But there are also the beginnings of some networks against racism and privatisation. There could be a lot more, because the European working class is experiencing many attacks.

For example, the European Union agreed at its summit in Barcelona last year to work towards raising the retirement age from 65 to 67. We need well organised, European-wide resistance.

**Do you think such attacks can be countered by loosely organised networks? Don’t we need a higher form of organisation?**

I think we are at the beginning of a long process. A few years ago, the majority in the European countries were in support of the neo-liberal agenda of our governments. Or at least they did not fight too strongly against it. For example, there was hardly any resistance to the war against Yugoslavia.

Now, the neoliberal agenda has been challenged and ruptured by the movement. However, our movement has not been able yet to change the balance of forces. That is why we need permanent action and permanent networks. Of course, it is not enough to have such actions on a national level. We are faced by an enemy that organises on a European-wide level. If we ourselves do not organise

on this level, we can never win. It is no good just organising on a national or even lower level.

The war on Iraq temporarily led to some important disagreements amongst our leaders. While we need to analyse and understand those disagreements, we must also recognise that on the big questions our ruling classes stand united - be it the so-called social democratic governments of Britain and Germany or the rightwing governments of Italy and France. While the media are still concerned with looking at the differences over the war, they have been busy planning a united European army.

We must be able and strong enough to oppose these developments. And you are right: this process must lead to the rebuilding of a strong, united, alternative left across Europe. By working together in campaigns, by organising common actions against this neo-liberal agenda, we will strengthen our own forces. This is just the beginning.

I think we are building a new international. That does not mean we have to repeat the mistakes of the previous versions. But we should be clear about what we are doing. All the campaigns and joint actions of our networks must move to the level of high politics, because otherwise they will not be able to change anything.

**How can we move to a new international? At the last preparatory meeting the Italian comrades voted against the French organising committee’s suggestion of an elected leadership for the ESF, which would have allowed for a more accountable and transparent method of organisation.**

In a political organisation or party of course you need to elect your leadership in an open and democratic way. But I think we are not there yet. There is a large diversity and plurality of organisations involved in the forum. It would be very difficult to organise representation for all these small and big groups. Not everybody would feel represented on such a body - but we want to include everybody. Also, we want to remain flexible in a world where things change incredibly fast. If there is a new movement, we want to include them.

Therefore we are strongly against having a fixed and inflexible set of representatives, as was suggested by the French comrades.

Having totally open structures is maybe not the most democratic solution, I agree. But at this moment in time we need them to include everybody. At some point in the near future we need to organise open debates about our strategies and answers for the future. At the moment, we all agree that we are against neo-liberalism, racism and war. But how do we fight it? And what are we fighting for? There is still a large diversity about how to fight neo-imperialism and war. In order to strike as a fist in the future, we need to agree on common strategies now.

**A number of organisations are discussing joining forces for the European elections in 2004, including Rifondazione and the Socialist Alliance. Do you view this as part of the same process?**

This is a very good development, which we fully support. I hope we will be able to present one united manifesto in the name of the ‘Alternative Left’ or something similar. But in our opinion it is not very easy to link this with the social movements. I think we are not ready for such a fusion yet.

The social forum movement is very pluralistic and if you try to bring it into the electoral field, it will start to separate. Our movement is not in the position to speak with one voice in the forthcoming election. But both developments are part of the same, bigger process. Both are moving in the same direction and have to fuse at some point. But not yet.

In a number of countries, political parties are part of the movement - mainly in Italy, Great Britain and Spain. In Italy, for example, the movement recognises the important role that Rifondazione Comunista is playing - even groups who do not like us very much.

At the WSF, for example, Rifondazione was prevented from registering its members as delegates. But the whole movement in Italy organised solidarity action and protested with one voice against this decision. The Brazilian organisers had to give in and allow us to participate.

I think this is the best solution. The movement in a country needs to decide if a political party is part of the movement or not. What matters is not your organisational form, but the content of your politics.

**But the French comrades are hostile to the participation of political parties in the ESF.**

We have had over a year of discussion on this and have still not resolved it. I am not sure if further discussion will be able to. The situation in some countries is different than in others. We cannot tell the movement in one country to start communication with a political party, when there has not been any communication before.

I think it would be wrong to have a final decision on this. The movement in each country should decide if a party is part of the process. The Italian comrades are working for the Florence solution: parties will be able to take part, but only on the level of organising workshops. We should also expand the so-called ‘dialogues’ between parties and movements that were started in Florence. These were very well attended and important events at the first ESF.

We should not forget that we are still at the beginning of a very important development. We have to experiment with forms of organisation and undoubtedly we will learn to correct our mistakes ●

## What we fight for

■ Our central aim is the organisation of communists, revolutionary socialists, anti-capitalists, anti-war activists and all politically advanced workers into a Communist Party. Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.

■ The Provisional Central Committee organises members of the Communists Party, but there exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called ‘parties’ on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed ‘line’ are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.

■ Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.

■ Communists are fully committed to building the anti-war movement but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question - ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.

■ Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of anti-war, working class and democratic parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, ‘One state, one party’. To the extent that the European Union becomes a state then that necessitates EU-wide trade unions and a Communist Party of the EU.

■ The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.

■ Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.

■ Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally. All forms of nationalist socialism are reactionary and anti-working class.

■ The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote. They will resist using every means at their disposal. Communists favour using parliament and winning the biggest possible working class representation. But workers must be ready to make revolution - peacefully if we can, forcibly if we must.

■ Communists fight for extreme democracy in all spheres of society. Democracy must be given a social content.

■ We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.

■ Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.

■ Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women’s oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.

■ Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin’s Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.

■ Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.

■ All who accept these principles are urged to join the Communist Party.

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## Telegraph's pro-war offensive

# Gloves come off

**D**o you share the dim memory that Arthur Scargill stole some money to buy a castle? He didn't. In fact, this exact allegation was never made, though it is how the story has survived in the minds of many. In this form it is a conflation of two old newspaper stories. One, a rather trivial piece of nonsense, that Scargill was about to buy a castle as a private home. The other, far more serious, that he siphoned off money from the National Union of Mineworkers to pay off his private mortgage.

In fact, both were untrue. The mortgage allegation was made by the *Daily Mirror* in the early 1990s. Faced by a renewed miners' struggle which garnered mass support, the *Mirror* let fly on events in the 1984-85 great miners' strike when the state had tried to bankrupt the union and funds were moving all about the place in order to keep the strike and miners and their families afloat. The paper's former editor, Roy Greenslade, recently admitted: "I am now convinced that Scargill didn't misuse strike funds."

The interesting thing is that when asked if they remember a scandal involving the miners' leader, most vaguely recall that he had 'stolen money or something', and many also mention the memorable 'King Arthur's castle' myth. It has become almost an urban legend.

It seems that if you throw enough mud, some of it will stick. The story was never retracted, but even had it been, most of the damage was already done the day the first headline was printed. The image of the union leader securing his own future while so many of those he represented were risking theirs in defence of their jobs and communities was powerful enough to imprint on the consciousness in a way which subsequent denials would never erase.

George Galloway, and with him the anti-war movement, is now facing this same problem. On April 22, *The Daily Telegraph* gave over its first five pages to crucifying the MP. The headline ran: "Galloway was in Saddam's pay, say secret Iraqi documents". He is accused of receiving bribes from Hussein's regime to the tune of £375,000 a year, all piped through the 'Mariam Appeal'. Galloway established this campaign to pay for the treatment of a sick Iraqi child, Mariam Hazma, in a British hospital. It went on to fund a sustained drive to oppose the sanctions against Iraq. The *Daily Telegraph* claims it was also used as part of a financial mechanism to hide payments made to the founder himself.

Unless and until this claim is proven, the responsibility of the left is clear. Galloway deserves the benefit of the doubt. Even in bourgeois law the principle is nominally accepted that a man is innocent until proven guilty, and in the case of a labour movement leader being attacked by one of the most reactionary journals of capitalism, this stance is doubly important.

The photographs selected to accompany the story are particularly telling. Half the cover is taken up with Galloway narrowing his eyes, his collar up, smoking a cigar, and looking for all the world like the



Arthur Scargill:  
vindicated

Arthur Daley of the left. On page three, four times the size of a family snapshot, the child Mariam Hazma is shown wide-eyed and vulnerable. Who could use a poor child like that for political or financial ends? Who, except of course the *Telegraph*. On page four, Galloway sits with Hussein, sharing a joke. The endless succession of arms traders and US, UK and French diplomats and politicians who courted him for political and economic gain, up to and including Donald Rumsfeld, do not appear in this album. Finally, and most bizarrely, Galloway's young and beautiful Palestinian wife, lying on a sofa and smiling into the camera, is shown in bright colour on page five.

Are any of these images relevant to a story of corruption, or the examination of Galloway's politics on the war? Of course not. But the accompanying text gently paints the man as, somehow, rather seedy. Various sobriquets are mentioned: "the member for Baghdad Central" and the wildly improbable "gorgeous George" - this latter being a reference to his "dapper dressing". His divorce is mentioned, and the fact that the woman he separated from had a daughter with him. We learn he had extra-marital sex. No reference need be made to the youth and beauty of his new wife: the picture says it all. Her nationality, though, is mentioned: she is a Palestinian, and so another Arab in his life. He apparently has a house in London and a holiday home in Portugal.

Allegations of misconduct while general secretary of War on Want are revived - though, as the paper concedes, an independent auditor later found no evidence of wrongdoing. So why mention them? Because, all in all, it is clear that George Galloway is a cad: slippery, self-regarding, suave and sartorially obsessed, a user of women, and a political and financial wheeler-dealer. This hatchet job is designed to make the possibility that he is also a traitor and a thief that much more likely.

But it is not about George, gorgeous or otherwise. The purpose of the coverage is quite clear: it is an attack on the entire anti-war movement, which dares to continue to highlight the crime of oc-

cupying Iraq in the teeth of every effort to rally the population around the flag. The gloves are now off. The soft tones of patronising 'understanding' to which the millions of demonstrators of February 15 were treated have hardened, as the number of protestors has fallen and the ruling class has recovered its confidence. We are no longer 'misguided':

**If Galloway proves to be innocent, he will join a large club of those who have been maligned by the intelligence services and the press for political reasons. A few examples:**

**Ramsay MacDonald:** Damaged after securing a trade agreement with the USSR when a letter in the name of the president of Comintern, Gregory Zinoviev, was 'intercepted' on its way to Russia recommending 'sedition' in the UK. The letter is now widely accepted to have been forged by MI5 agents Sidney Reilly and Arthur Gregory.

**Harold Wilson:** Undermined by a series of bizarre rumours and the threat of 'exposure' by a group of MI5 agents, ac-

cording to *Spy Catcher* author Peter Wright and other sources.

**Tony Benn:** Diagnosed 'insane' by *The Sun* in a story supported by 'quotes' from an American psychologist. The quotes were simply made up. The expert in question later described the words attributed to him as 'absurd'.

**Arthur Scargill:** Accused by the *Daily Mirror* of stealing £25,000 from the NUM to pay off his mortgage, and receiving funds from Libya. The then editor, Roy Greenslade, said last year: "I am now convinced that Scargill didn't misuse strike funds and that the union didn't get money from Libya."

**Michael Foot:** Accused by implication of being a Soviet spy by the *Sunday*

itself. The sly plural in the editorial's reference to the possible complicity of the "leaders" is pure abuse, and the idea that such motives infect the entire movement goes beyond this and into virulent and contemptible fantasy.

If ever there were a warning that any attempt to avoid offending the bourgeois press or 'moderate' opinion was a waste of time on the part of the Stop the War Coalition, this is it. US and UK imperialism are once again at war with the world, and the stakes are very high. While *The Daily Telegraph* has used falsity and innuendo to malign the anti-war movement, in a sense it is adopting a more honest - or at least more naked - position, and communists, anti-capitalists and anti-war protestors can expect to see much more of the same.

Our only defence is the truth. Restricting ourselves to a soft, pacifist or pro-UN line will not buy off such opposition, but it will blunt our message. The rape of Iraq was carried out for profit and power, and the rich and powerful whose interests it served are ready to do it again to another innocent people. A clear anti-imperialist fight must be fought if our movement is not merely to survive, but to achieve any of the aims for which it exists ●

Manny Neira

## A brief history of lying

cording to *Spy Catcher* author Peter Wright and other sources.

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**Michael Foot:** Accused by implication of being a Soviet spy by the *Sunday*

*Times*. Its story, headed "KGB: Michael Foot was our agent", repeated the allegation that Russia funded *Tribune* during Foot's editorship - an allegation which originally appeared in a book by defector Oleg Gordievsky. The paper settled for £100,000 to avoid putting Maxwell in the dock.

**Carmen Proetta:** Labelled "anti-British" and accused of involvement in vice and drugs by the *Sunday Times* and called "The tart of Gib" by the *Sun* after appearing as an eye witness in the TV programme *Death on the Rock*, which argued that the SAS had executed four unarmed IRA members. She eventually received £300,000 in out of court settlements ●

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